
VOICES OF THE WEST COAST
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A DISTINCTIVE WEST COAST CHARACTER
IN NEW ZEALAND FICTION

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Abstract:

The West Coast of the South Island has a particular history distinct from other regions of New Zealand because of its physical isolation, its sparse and fragmented Maori occupation, its lack of suitability for farm settlement, and its social and economic links with Australia through nineteenth century shipping routes; many of the goldminers who first populated the region came via the Victoria goldfields and had little relationship with other South Island settlements.

This thesis begins with a chronological annotated bibliography of imaginative writing with the West Coast as its setting, then analyses this writing in terms of the West Coast landscape, its settlement history and its four major physical resources – pounamu, gold, coal and timber – and the way in which each has influenced the literature. It further examines the work of five West Coast writers, Jean Devanny, Peter Hooper, Keri Hulme, Jeffrey Paparoa Holman and Peter Hawes, in the context of their imaginative portrayal of the characteristics of the region. It concludes that there is a discernible perception among New Zealanders, fostered particularly by novelists and film-makers who have set their work on the Coast, that the region has iconic status and represents values and attitudes which appeal to the wider audience as distinctive.

In his 1940 attempt to encourage a national literature, Monte Holcroft wrote that, “...the spirit of a country, recognisable in history and literature, is a kind of collective definition undertaken by a line of creative writers.”¹ New Zealand has long since developed a healthy diversity of creative literature, but it is argued in this thesis that Holcroft’s definition can now be restated in regional terms; the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand has its own spirit, is in a sense another country, and has been so defined by its creative fiction.

¹ M H Holcroft, *The Deepening Stream*, Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1940, 29.

INTRODUCTION

“Write of New Zealanders who have family traditions stretching back a hundred years – who don’t feel New Zealand a young country – who don’t quote poetry or feel nostalgia for England – people who love the Coast and its life.” Peter Hooper²

West Coast literature is first concerned with the physical landscape and its spiritual associations, second with a strong political and social independence and third with an individualism of spirit. These emphases are understandable since, historically, the Coast has a culture of exploitation, personal gain and personal survival. Socially, economically and culturally, the Coast developed differently from the rest of New Zealand because of its geography and to a large extent its geology: such development depended almost exclusively on extractive industries. The environment was consistently harsh and there was a marked lack of cultural continuity; neither Maori tribalism nor British colonialism impacted to any great extent and most of the population came from the Victoria goldfields. While in the face of adversity residents strongly identify as ‘Coasters’, and such self-identification is readily accepted by the rest of New Zealand³, it appears that the emotional and spiritual connection is more important than the genealogical one.

In West Coast fiction these elements combine in the figure of the ‘wild child’, often intellectually or emotionally challenged and/or challenging, independent of conventional family structures and acting as a catalyst for adult interactions, which has emerged as a major theme in the literature. The ‘wild child’ is Devanny’s Lily, Hulme’s Simon, Brown’s Rosa, Patrick’s Rose and Randall’s Halfie, and there are elements in characters such as Pearson’s Peter, Ewen’s Majohn, Hooper’s young Tama, Kelly’s Libby, Hunt’s Murray and Hawes’ Feefi. The Coast’s ‘wild child’ is often but not necessarily always the feisty, independent problem-solving orphan of Dickens, Mark Twain or J K Rowling; the romantic and imaginative appeal of such a position and its possibilities are well-recognised in literature, but the West Coast ‘wild child’ is catalyst rather than main character, a lens through which to view events and responses.

² Peter Hooper, Notes on a Proposed Literary Magazine. Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/011.

³ “Coaster: person from the West Coast of the South Island” in David McGill, *A Dictionary of Kiwi Slang*. Lower Hutt: Mills Publications, 1988, 29.

The exploitative nature of Coast industry reflects in much of its literature, with the notable exception of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, which, as Joy Cowley said in a contemporary review⁴, owes nothing to European literary landscapes but grew “seed, shoot, roots and all” from the breast of Papatuanuku, the earth mother. Her reaction was in line with Hooper's definition of regional literature: Hulme's novel contains no nostalgia for England and invokes no sense of a pioneer or settler mindset; both Joe and Kerewin know themselves as New Zealanders with New Zealand family traditions, and although Simon is a traveller, in the sense that he arrived from another country, the novel encompasses his Irish and French parentage in the same way that it references Kerewin's Japanese experience, acknowledging global cultural influences in a regional context. Although it is more usually perceived as a regional novel in the wider New Zealand sense, *The Bone People* has as its basic premise that family is not necessarily nuclear, love is not always sexual and community can take unexpected forms; the Coast seems the natural setting for such a work.

Much Coast fiction is concerned with exploitation not only of the land but also of the people. Mining the goldfields era began with travelling balladeers Charles Thatcher and Joe Small in the music halls and carried on with the Savage Clubs, an Australian phenomenon which first appeared in Westport in the 1890s. Goldfields fiction set in Victoria, Otago and on the Coast was popular in newspapers on both sides of the Tasman from the 1870s, and Reve Wardon's *McPherson's Gully* appeared in 1892, but the next wave of Coast-based goldfields fiction, which began with trans-Tasman writer and novelist Will Lawson in 1951 and has had a revival in the last decade with writers such as Kelly, Tremain and Randall, is necessarily historical and recreates social environments within the constraints and biases of a modern readership.

Coalmining fiction writers produced more or less contemporary novels until the 1980s, when Eric Beardsley began the trend towards historical fiction of which Jenny Patrick's *Denniston Rose* and *Heart of Coal* are the best known examples, while the fishing and timber industries feature to a much lesser extent in poetry and fiction. There is still a thriving coalmining industry on the Coast, but it is highly mechanised and far less visible. The world is a wider place now and nostalgia drives the literature: towns like

⁴ Joy Cowley, 'We are the bone people,' *New Zealand Listener*, May 1984.

Blackball have become metaphors for loss of community, the loss of a way of life. Hooper writes, “Suddenly time ran out, fire in the seam/ engulfed the past, the settlement was doomed”⁵; Holman asks “Old man, who are you/ now the seam’s worked out?”⁶ Fifty years ago the symbol of a coal town was the grey smoke from the chimneys, settling on the town like a shroud and dampening all hopes and aspirations for a better life, but that has been replaced by broken chimneys with blackberries growing through them, metaphor for the exploitation of the workers themselves who have been cast aside and abandoned, as “the coal range sits here in/the wind, full of spiders...”⁷

More recently, concern for the natural environment has been a focus for writers, particularly in the Buller region which has been the subject of larger political campaigns by conservation groups. The spirit of political and social independence, developed from the working class roots of West Coasters and bolstered in the 1970s and 1980s by alternative lifestyle movements which drew writers and artists to the Coast because of its environmental values and low cost of living, is reflected in the large number of individual and co-operative publishing ventures in a region which is the most sparsely populated in New Zealand, with just over 31,000 people spread over 23,000 square kilometres of land, and which contributes only one percent of the GDP⁸.

In considering the imaginative writing of the West Coast I have first compiled a chronological bibliography of published song, poetry, novels, drama and film with the Coast as its subject, secondly identified elements common to some or all of the work which appear to be characteristic of Coast literature, and thirdly examined in more depth the work of five Coast writers, Jean Devanny, Peter Hooper, Keri Hulme, Jeffrey Paparoa Holman and Peter Hawes, whose writing exemplifies these elements.

⁵ Peter Hooper, ‘Burning Mine, Stockton’, *Journey Towards an Elegy & Other Poems*. Christchurch: The Nag’s Head Press, 1969, 9.

⁶ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, ‘The Retired Miner (Runanga 1984)’, first published in Holman (ed), *Out of His Treasures: A Collection of West Coast Verse*, Runanga: Fig Tree Press, 1985.

⁷ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, *The Late Great Blackball Bridge Sonnets*, Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2004, 55.

⁸ 2006 Census figures at [www/stats.govt.nz/census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats](http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats)

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WEST COAST FICTION

This is an annotated chronological bibliography of all known creative fiction, generally although not exclusively published in written form, with the West Coast as its subject or setting.⁹ Poetry, prose fiction, drama and film have been included, generally biography and non-fiction have not; the more important non-fiction books which have provided source material for much of the work in this bibliography are discussed in the analysis of Coast literature which forms the second part of this thesis. Poetry and prose published only in contemporary newspapers and journals has largely been excluded, and where a work appears in more than one book or collection I have listed its first appearance, although inevitably there are overlaps. For the purpose of this thesis I have defined the West Coast geographically and socially rather than politically, from Jackson Bay to Farewell Spit; this broad area largely excludes Fiordland, which has historically been considered a separate region accessed from Otago, but includes West Whanganui and Pūponga which have strong cultural ties with the Coast. Some work set in other parts of New Zealand has been included for reasons explained in each case.

This unselective survey, which covers nearly 200 years of imaginative writing about a particular region within the larger body of New Zealand literature, not only reflects the changing cultural and intellectual perspectives of the nation over time but also canvases the changing position of the Coast, and the particular preoccupations of Coasters, in relation to the rest of the country and the wider world. Recurring themes and motifs demonstrate not only how Coasters have seen themselves and been seen by others, but also how the West Coast has been mythologized to satisfy a reading and viewing audience and to symbolise particular elements of 'New Zealandness' which have become increasingly significant to perceptions of national identity.

⁹ 180 works have been identified through library and media searches and personal enquiry as falling within the scope of this study; there may be some that I have missed.

C1814: ‘Davy Lowston’ (anon).

This folk song is based on the true story of sealer David Lowrieston and his party who were rescued from South Westland with their haul of 14,000 skins after being stranded for more than two years. The men were returned to Sydney in December 1813 and the song is believed to have originated on the Sydney waterfront soon afterwards, sung to the widely-known tune of ‘Captain Kidd’. It was collected in the USA in the 1920s, by folk music enthusiast John Leebrick, from the daughter of a South Seas whaler who had heard it sung by former sealers at a Cloudy Bay in 1836 (American and British whalers were frequent visitors to Cloudy Bay and Kororareka, in New Zealand, and Port Jackson in Australia, and many had former sealers in their crews). Leebrick sent the song to New Zealander Neil Colquhoun in 1957 and it has since been published¹⁰, recorded and widely sung. Folk historian Frank Fyfe refers to a “Martins Bay beachcomber”¹¹ singing a version of ‘David Lowrieston’ in South Westland in the 1930s.

1865: Thatcher, Charles. ‘Experiences of Hokitika’, *Nelson Examiner*, 23 September 1865. Reprinted in Hoskins, Robert. *Goldfield Balladeer : The Life and Times of the Celebrated Charles R. Thatcher*. Auckland: Collins, 1977.

Australian goldfields entertainer Charles Thatcher first played the West Coast of New Zealand in 1865 with his wife Madame Vitelli and friend Joe Small, performing for a season at the Corinthian Hotel before moving on to Nelson. His poem ‘Experiences of Hokitika’ documents his first shipwreck on the Hokitika bar on 18 June 1865, when the screw steamer *Wakool* came out to take passengers and cargo off the *Omea* from Dunedin but had to run onto the beach and was totally wrecked.¹² The troupe made it ashore but lost their luggage and props, and Thatcher, renowned for his ability to write to the occasion, capitalised on the experience with this poem set to music; the chorus line is “They look very blue and they’re all wet through/ When they land in Hokitika”¹³ Thatcher arrived on

¹⁰ Neil Colquhoun, *New Zealand Folk Songs*. Auckland: W E A, 1965.

¹¹ Frank Fyfe, ‘Pre-Colonial Song: David Lowston,’ *Maoriland: Journal of the New Zealand Folklore Society* Spring 1970, 27.

¹² *Otago Witness*, 3 June 1865 ‘Disastrous gales and floods at Hokitika’.

¹³ Robert Hoskins, *Goldfield Balladeer : The Life and Times of the Celebrated Charles R. Thatcher*. Auckland: Collins, 1977, 173-4.

the Coast at the height of the rush which he had talked up in Dunedin with 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer' and 'Rush to Okatiki', and played at the Corinthian Theatre, which had a stage at one end, three bars and no windows, and held a standing audience of up to 700 people. Thatcher was a great satirist and his wit was frequently at the expense of local identities such as 'the sandy haired inspector of police' and 'McTavish of the Union Bank' who was one of the few to successfully thwart him.¹⁴ He and his wife also led the singing for Sunday preachers, including Rev George Harper, who became their spiritual advisor. Like the goldminers themselves, they drew their material from Australian and New Zealand goldfields and they were known and appreciated on both sides of the Tasman. They made their second and last tour of the Coast in the summer of 1869, playing at Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika and featuring a 'Goldfields Panorama', which was a series of painted tableaux to illustrate the songs and patter, a popular theatrical feature at the time. Thatcher published his own 'songsters' (songbooks), although none was specific to the Coast, and his repertoire included 'New Chums at the Diggings', first published in *Songs of the War*¹⁵ in 1864, which was later a favourite party piece of Kumara storekeeper and politician Dick Seddon, and 'Gold's a Wonderful Thing', about a West Coast miner who made his fortune and moved to Auckland¹⁶. Other Coast goldfields songs by Thatcher and his contemporaries were collected and recorded in the 1960s and 1970s by folk musicians and historians such as Neil Colquhoun¹⁷, Rona Bailey and Phil Garland¹⁸, and his work also survives in contemporary newspapers and in Robert Hoskins' 1977 biography *Goldfield Balladeer* which is based on a University of Canterbury thesis.¹⁹

¹⁴ Hoskins 96.

¹⁵ Charles Thatcher, *Songs of the War*, Auckland: J Harris, 1964.

¹⁶ Neil Colquhoun (ed), *New Zealand Folksongs: Song of a Young Country*, Auckland: A H & A W Reed, 1972, 34.

¹⁷ Colquhoun, *New Zealand Folk Songs*.

¹⁸ Phil Garland, David De Santi, and H. W. G. Lowe, *The Singing Kiwi*, Albion Park, NSW: Willy Wag Productions, 1996.

¹⁹ Robert H B Hoskins, 'Popular Song and Folklore : Reviewing the New Zealand Songs of a Goldfields Entertainer Charles Robert Thatcher,' M A Thesis, History and Literature of Music, University of Canterbury, 1973.

1866: Small, Joe, *Joe Small's New Zealand and Australian Songster and Goldfields Diary*. Christchurch: Tribe, Mosely and Caygill. (Reprinted Christchurch: Nag's Head Press, 1970)

Small left his job as a bookkeeper in Sydney to go digging on the Victoria fields, wrote and sang his first hit on the Bendigo diggings c.1852 and promptly reinvented himself as an Irish comedian who followed the gold rushes. He toured the New Zealand goldfields with Charles Thatcher in 1869 but his writing was never as prolific, witty or topical. His one published Coast song, 'Delaney's Visit to Hokitika' (23-25) praises New Zealand as an Irishman's paradise but complains that his ship was wrecked on the Hokitika bar, Revell Street was nothing but a sea of mud and he was greeted by "an ould Maori woman,/with a thumpin' big stone hanging down from her ear" who told him there was no gold left; her eight words in Maori make this the first bi-lingual Coast poem published in a book.

1872: Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon, or, over the Range*. London: Trubner.

Butler was a keen and experienced mountaineer who in the summer of 1861 searched for and found a pass over the ranges from his Canterbury high country sheep station (Mesopotamia) to the West Coast. He describes his three climbing expeditions into the Southern Alps, in company with John Baker, in *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement* (London, 1863) but in his futuristic novel *Erewhon* his protagonist enters the land over the range by taking to the water in a raft made of flax stalks, an action closely modelled on the way surveyor Henry Whitcombe and guide Jacob Louper ventured onto the Taramakau River when they traversed the Southern Alps via the same pass (later named the Whitcombe Pass). Butler describes the frightening and dangerous river crossing as it was recounted in *The Press* by Jacob Louper, the companion who survived when Whitcombe drowned. Like Louper, the fictional Higgs restores his strength by lighting a fire and eating wild ducks before venturing further into the strange and sombre landscape (which quickly segues into more benign countryside reminiscent of northern Italy). Like the West Coast of the 1860s, Butler's *Erewhon* is a country apart, whose inhabitants follow their own laws and customs broadly based on physical health and an aversion to machinery. Butler's novel turns on irony and counterpoint and is both an essay on Darwinism and a commentary on

Victorian society; it was written in England and published anonymously there in 1872, and although it doesn't name New Zealand it has since been recognised and acclaimed as the most significant literary work to have come out of the colony. Butler spent four years in Canterbury, much of it developing his successful sheep station in the headwaters of the Rangitata River but at the same time developing his writing skills and literary arguments through the columns of *The Press* newspaper, where he published his thoughts on Darwin's *Origin of Species* as 'Darwin among the Machines' on 13 June 1863 before expanding the essay into 'The Book of the Machines' in *Erewhon*. Butler makes use of West Coast geography to invert his narrator's perspective, developing the 'Man Alone' theme recognisable in later Coast literature, and also draws on observations of the customs and attitudes of Maori travellers crossing between Canterbury and the West Coast.

1888: Chapman, R H (ed) *Mihawhenua : the adventures of a party of tourists amongst a tribe of Maoris discovered in western Otago, New Zealand. Recorded by R W Brock, MA, LLB. Dunedin: R Wilkie & Co, 1888. Digital edition Wellington, New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2008, www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-ChaMiha.html*

Mihawhenua is tentatively acknowledged as the work of Gilbert Rock, "a name suggestive of R. W. Brock, the alleged recorder of story"²⁰, although it has also been linked to 'Scenes in the Southern Alps'²¹ a story describing an expedition up the Godley River from Lake Tekapo to the summit of the Sealey Pass, which looks down to the Whataroa River north of Okarito, in May 1888. Gilbert Rock was the pen name of John Alexander Barr, a Dunedin solicitor known to have written the romantic novels *Colonists : illustrating goldfields and city life in Australia between 1851 and 1870* (set in Melbourne) and *By Passion Driven: A Story of a Wasted Life* (set in Otago), both published by Wilkie & Co in Dunedin in 1888. Rock made headlines throughout New Zealand in May 1888 when he petitioned the House of Representatives, asking for a protective tax on all imported literature in order that local authors could be adequately rewarded for their labours, adding that "I am prepared to supply the colonial market with literature if inducement offers."²² *The Grey River Argus* described the petition as one of the funniest demands that ever came under public notice

²⁰ From a hand-written note in the flyleaf of the book used by the NZETC.

²¹ 'L.C.S.', 'Scenes from the Southern Alps', *Zealandia* Vol 1 no 10.

²² 'Passing Notes,' *Otago Daily Times*, 2 June 1888, 5.

and pronounced Rock's work "the veriest rubbish", ²³ while most other newspapers carrying the story referred to Rock as a writer of "shilling shockers". The following year Christchurch bookseller W J Simpson referred to three books by Rock, another indication that he was responsible for *Mihawhenua*, commenting that although they were only a shilling each there had been few sold. ²⁴ Later in 1889 John Barr did "the Pacific Slope" by abandoning his wife and children and absconding with an estimated £10,000 of his firm's trust funds, and was adjudicated bankrupt. ²⁵

Mihawhenua is a fantasy adventure narrated by young Dunedin lawyer Robert Brock, who with two friends and two hired men sets off on an excursion to West Otago from which they never return. There are similarities to Butler's *Erewhon* in the way they enter the different world of the Coast, climbing from Queenstown into the mountains to find a warm water lake on the mountain top, surrounded by lush vegetation, which freezes into a glacier. The adventurers carry canvas boats which they anchor to a large block of ice and ride down the glacier to a river below. Dazed and bewildered by the sudden descent they find themselves in another world inhabited by Rangitani [sic] Maori who ride moa and grow crops. The group is befriended by Te Kahu (the kite maker) and make the acquaintance of a shipwrecked French sailor who ultimately betrays them. After various incidents, including a fight with Waikato cannibals, the loss of two of their party, a volcanic eruption, a visit to an ice cavern where the dead are entombed, and a treacherous attack led by the Frenchman, they realise they are virtual prisoners with no hope of escape, and send the account of their adventures over the Alps by kite with a plea for rescue. This manuscript, purportedly found by editor R H Chapman, who was Brock's friend and had been prevented at the last minute from joining the party, forms the text of the book. Like *Erewhon*, *Mihawhenua* is 'another country' with little relationship to the geography or sociology of the Coast, but this is a straightforward adventure story, blending the dramatic devices of contemporary Victorian fiction with the romanticised colonial view of Maoriland complete with sublime scenery, heroic warriors, beautiful maidens and a seasoning of spiritualism. It appears to have received little public attention but was

²³ Editorial, *Grey River Argus*, 28 May 1888, 2.

²⁴ 'An Interview with Mr J S Williams,' *Star*, 3 June 1889.

²⁵ 'The Levanting Solicitor-Author,' *Evening Post*, 8 November 1889, 2.

favourably reviewed as “distinctly interesting” by the *Hawke’s Bay Herald*,²⁶ which compared the author to Rider Haggard.

1890: Darrell, George. *The Pakeha*. Stage play.

George Frederick Price arrived on the West Coast from Melbourne in 1865 and lived near Hokitika for the next two years, working first as a gold miner, then as a newspaper journalist. He moved to Dunedin where he managed the *Evening Star* newspaper, got to know Len Farjeon, Julius Vogel and other theatrical people at the Princess Theatre, formed a relationship with Fanny Cathcart (Mrs Robert Heir) whom he later married, and embarked on a career in theatre. By 1868 he was in Melbourne performing with the Theatre Royal stock company under the stage name of George Darrell, which he used for the rest of his life.²⁷ He wrote melodramatic plays which he frequently reworked with new titles, playing the lead roles himself opposite Fanny Cathcart and later his second wife Christine Peachey, and touring Australia, New Zealand, San Francisco, New York and Johannesburg with his own troupe. ‘The Pakeha’, adapted from his earlier play ‘Transported for Life’, was first performed at the Opera House in Wellington on 6 January 1890 and toured around much of the country, and it reappeared as ‘Life for Life’ in Sydney and Adelaide in 1891,²⁸ then at the Theatre Royal in Melbourne on 22 April 1893. No manuscript has been found but the play was extensively reviewed in the *Evening Post*.²⁹ Three of the four acts are set on the West Coast during the Hokitika gold rush; apparently a murderer confesses to his crime, his accomplice is arrested and an innocent man escapes from captivity. Darrell’s productions were known for their painted scenery and dramatic onstage ‘sensations’; in this case a backdrop of the Otira Gorge drew praise from critics and the ‘sticking-up’ of the gold escort from Hokitika to Christchurch introduced an actual coach and two horses onto the stage with spectacular effect³⁰ (reputedly even more spectacular during one performance in Christchurch when the scene went wrong and part of the theatre was damaged). The title

²⁶ ‘New Books,’ *The Hawke’s Bay Herald*, 10 December, 1888

²⁷ Eric Irvin, *Gentleman George, King of Melodrama : The Theatrical Life and Times of George Darrell, 1841-1921*. St. Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, 10.

²⁸ Irvin 182.

²⁹ ‘The Pakeha’, *Evening Post*, Volume XXXIX, Issue 5, 7 January 1890, 2.

³⁰ *NZ Mail* 10 January 1890, quoted in Irwin 165.

refers to a deaf mute goldminer, twin of the murdered man and purportedly known to the diggers as ‘The Pakeha’, which apparently Darrell understood to mean ‘The Stranger’. Darrell’s later work, influenced by novelist Nat Gould, moved away from frontier goldfields subjects to spy drama. He began his last successful tour of New Zealand in Greymouth in December 1904 under the management of the McMahon Company.³¹

1892: Wardon, Reve, *McPherson’s Gully: a Tale of New Zealand Life*. Simpson & Williams, Christchurch, 1892. Digital edition Wellington, New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2008, www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-WarMacp.html

A 55-page goldfields novel “containing some views of the social outlook from the proletarian standpoint”, this cautionary tale fits into the strong Puritan theme of New Zealand fiction, in this case as an ‘anti-puritan’ argument.³² Author Reve Wardon remains a mystery figure but convincing West Coast mining scenes and the socialist rhetoric of experienced prospector Neil Macpherson suggest a writer familiar with the Australian and New Zealand goldfields. Chief protagonist Alick Spencer, “a stalwart young shoemaker” and his wife Jeannie and their child arrive at Lyttelton in the 1870s and build a home, but after a couple of years he becomes unemployed, forced to leave his family and look further afield. His West Coast sojourn becomes a pilgrimage to a different world where all men are equal and have the potential to redeem themselves free of encumbrances, the goldfields offering a stateless and classless society which values personal strength, stamina and loyalty. The miners at Macpherson’s Gully are from Europe, California and Australia, their nationalities like their relationships a matter of temporary and fluid convenience; when heavy rain and landslips destroy their laboriously-constructed workings near Dilmanstown, south of Greymouth, they shrug and move on at the whim of the fickle gods of fortune. Alick clings to his religious faith, personified in the anthropomorphic vision of an old man in the bush, and Macpherson’s generosity sees him on his way home with money in his pocket but to no avail: he is drowned in the Taramakau River, underlining Wardon’s message that “there is neither truth nor justice in the universe of God.” The salvationist themes that opened the novel have been subverted; the young couple’s faith, moral

³¹ Irwin 202

³² Kirstine Moffatt, ‘The Puritan paradox: an annotated bibliography of Puritan and anti-Puritan New Zealand fiction, 1860-1940,’ Part 2: reactions against Puritanism. Kōtare 2000, Volume Three, Number Two, NZETC.

standards, work ethic and dogged optimism prove insufficient against the powers of capitalism and the family is eventually destroyed, the sole survivor committed to Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum. The socialist agenda, spelled out by Mac early in the novel and underlined by Alick's vision in the bush, is for a new order free of the shackles of religion and capitalism.

1893: Morris, J. G. *The Westland Minstrel : Original Songs & Poems*. Hokitika: Guardian Steam Printing Works.

The line "Hail to Zealandia the land of my birth!" in the opening poem (1) suggests a relatively young poet, but 'To An Old Boot' (49) and "Long have I lived a lonely life" (60) explore themes of old age, loss and regret. Comic songs, love songs and the patriotic 'Jubilee Ode' ("Long may Britannia's empire stand ... " 27), indicate a performing poet accustomed to entertaining his audience in the convention of the times. The second half of this substantial 100-page book comprises an epic poem, 'The Phantom Chief; A Maori Tale' (66-99) about a fight between brothers over a woman in Waikato: the narrator is a ghostly chieftain whose grave was disturbed by the poet sleeping on it, and the story is told in the classic 'high style' popular among educated colonists.

Two typewritten poems on foolscap paper tucked into the book in the Macmillan Brown Library at the University of Canterbury are by T Keily, and appear contemporaneous with Morris's work. The first, 'The Famous Contract', is very much in the entertaining style of the day and tells the story of three Irish contractors tendering for a construction job and their consequent victorious battle with the town clerk. The second is 'Con O'Regan's Hero' and its content – "In matters witty, mild and wise/Three times he won the writing prize,/ He goes to St Joseph's School ..." – makes it likely that Keily, O'Regan and possibly Morris were known to each other.³³

³³ *The West Coast Times* 24 April 1893 reports that James G Morris applied unsuccessfully for the post of secretary to the Westland Hospital Board; no other information has been found about this writer.

1894: O'Regan, Cornelius J. *Voices of Wave and Tree : Poems*. Greymouth: Printed at the Evening Star Office.

Born at Inangahua Landing and the youngest surviving child in a family of seven, Cornelius O'Regan won a two-year scholarship to Greymouth Technical School and, after a further year of private coaching at St Joseph's School in Reefton, matriculated in 1891. He had a weak heart and chose not to attend university but became the sole charge teacher at Inangahua Junction School. His poetry, written over a four-year period in his late teens, was published in the *Canterbury Times*, the *Otago Witness* and the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*. This first 19-page collection establishes him as a talented and promising writer.

1896: Hodgson, William Charles, and Alfred A Grace (ed). *Poems of Willam Hodgson*. Nelson: A G Betts.

William Hodgson was educated in Manchester and destined for Oxford or Cambridge before his father's business failed and the family immigrated to New Zealand, establishing a small farm at Wakapuaka near Nelson. Hodgson became a teacher and eventually a headmaster before taking the job of Inspector of Schools, a position he held for thirty years from 1863 until his retirement. He travelled throughout Nelson, Marlborough and the West Coast, often on horseback, and was renowned for arriving at each destination with immaculately shined shoes, in spite of mud, dust and frequent river crossings, due to keeping brushes and polish in a pocket of his coat.³⁴ Hodgson frequently visited isolated communities such as Blackball and Denniston, sometimes staying with a family but more often in hotels and boarding houses, and he read, translated and wrote classical poetry for recreation. In his lengthy introduction, Alfred Grace praises the poet's literary taste and classical learning, pointing to the 'Greek Stories Retold' which comprise the second part of the 66pp collection as fine work of the 'old school' and deprecating, by comparison, the 'Nelson Lays' which offer insights into the various characters, from patriarch and traveller to servant girl and larrikin, that make up colonial society. In 'The Lay of the Weather-Bound' (8) the poet vents his feelings about the West Coast and its wealth of "all things vile and mean", its lack of sun and life, constant rain and conscious ugliness. "Written at

³⁴ Cheryl Win and Sandy Isbister. *Collingwood Kids*. Collingwood: Collingwood Area School, 2009, 14.

Sludgeville, Pactolus County” (a reference to the river filled with gold in Greek mythology), the poem concludes that after the rest of the world had been created, Dame Nature “Picked up the refuse scraps in fun,/And fashioned the West Coast.”

1896: O'Regan, Cornelius J., and John Christie (ed). *Poems*. Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs.

Published posthumously by O'Regan's elder brother Patrick, a former journalist turned lawyer who was elected MP for Buller, this collection shows the surprising range of O'Regan's work. The preface by John Christie describes his poetry as “instinct with the melody and informed with the mental power of a master”. Poems such as ‘A West Coast Legend’ (35) and ‘Whisky Brown’ (37) are entertainment pieces in typical Coast style, others are classical in form, while ‘Life's Vigil’ (13), ‘Solaced’ (28) and ‘A Lay of the Old Life’ (29) are reflections on his life. O'Regan knew he would die young; he valued the friendships he made, his work as a scholar and teacher and the environment he lived in, but what is interesting about his poetry is the impact it had on the wider literary community, evidenced by newspapers such as the *Otago Witness* which ran a detailed obituary including a photograph and some of his poetry.³⁵ *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* (259) describes him as “... the first native-born New Zealander to write, whilst yet a boy, poetry touched with the promise of permanency,” and Alfred A Grace, listing him with Maning, Grey, Domett and Bracken, called him “our Keats who died too young.”³⁶

1901: Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon Revisited*. London: Grant Richards.

The full title of this second satirical novel, a belated sequel to *Erewhon* (1872), is *Erewhon Revisited Twenty Years Later, Both by the Original Discoverer of the Country and by His Son*. It begins by deprecating the original author, a favourite device of Butler, and the story is taken up when the original character (now revealed as George Higgs), makes a return trip to Erewhon and then relays his adventures to his son. To his horror Higgs finds that due to his dramatic aerial elopement twenty years earlier he has been immortalised as The Sunchild, and that “the mushroom spawn of myth”³⁷ has given rise to a distorted series of

³⁵ ‘A New Zealand Lycidus’ in *Otago Witness*, issue 2591, 11 November 1903, 70.

³⁶ Alfred A Grace, Introduction, *The Poems of William Hodgson*, Nelson: Alfred E Betts, 1896.

³⁷ Samuel Butler, *Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited*, New York: Random House, 1937, 366.

laws and religious observances. Although Butler once again describes in some detail the route over the Alps from Canterbury, the novel which was written and published in England has no other discernible Coast connotations.

1901: Ridge, Lola. 'A Deserted Diggings, Maoriland'. *Bulletin*, Sydney, 5 October 1901.

Radical left-wing American poet Lola Ridge was born in Dublin but brought up on the West Coast of New Zealand, where her widowed mother Emma married goldminer Donald McFarlane at Hokitika in 1880 and she herself married goldminer Peter Webster in 1895.³⁸ She was christened Rose Emily Ridge but married as Rosalie Ridge and described her occupation as artist; her married name was Rosa Webster. Her first poems were published as 'Lola' and it was not until 1903 that she began signing her work 'Lola Ridge'. From 1901 to 1903 she published seven goldfields poems in the Sydney *Bulletin* and in November 1903 she sailed with her mother and her second and only surviving son Keith Webster, aged three, for Sydney, where for the next three years she studied art and wrote regularly for the *Bulletin*. After her mother died in 1907 she went to live in New York's Greenwich Village where she became active in the anarchist movement. Mark Derby records that in 1908 her poem 'The Martyrs of Hell' appeared on the cover of *Mother Earth*, the anarchist monthly edited by Emma Goldman³⁹, and in 1911 her poem 'Freedom' ("Let men be free!/ Hate is the price/ of servitude") was similarly featured⁴⁰; she won acclaim in 1918 for *The Ghetto and other poems* and went on to become "a leading figure in the intellectual left."⁴¹ Ridge never acknowledged her New Zealand connection, claiming to be Australian, but her first poems were written and published from Lake Kaniere, inland from Hokitika, where her husband was part-owner of a hydraulic sluicing claim. 'Driving the Cattle Home', was published in the *Otago Witness* in 1902,⁴² and for the next twelve months she was a regular contributor to *NZ Illustrated Magazine*, with

³⁸ Michelle Leggott, 'The First Life: A Chronology of Lola Ridge's Australasian Years'. Documentation for a talk presented at Te Rau Aroha Marae, Bluff, 22 April 2006.

³⁹ Mark Derby, 'Lola Ridge,' presented at Blackball 2008.

⁴⁰ Lola Ridge, 'Freedom', *Mother Earth*, Vol 6, June 1911, No 4

⁴¹ Nancy Berke, *Women Poets on the Left: Lola Ridge, Genevieve Taggard, Margaret Walker*, Florida: University Press, 2001.

⁴² Lola Ridge, 'Driving the Cattle Home,' *Otago Witness*, 12 March 1902 (reprinted in *New magazine USA* September 1911)

'Lake Kaniere' (November 1902), 'The Legend of the Cross' (April 1903), 'Dead Pine Shadows' (May 1903), 'The Dream Man' (December 1903), and 'Moonstruck' (January 1904). Her *Bulletin* poems in that period were; 'A Deserted Diggings, Maoriland' (5 October 1901), 'By the Mouth of the Shaft' (23 Nov 1901), 'The Three Little Children' (15 March 1902), 'Baby's Sick' (30 July 1903), 'At Sundown' (10 Sept 1903), 'On the Track' (1 Oct 1903) and 'Love and Pain' (23 Oct 1903).⁴³ This early poetry was about the visual world of the goldfields, with a focus on light and shadows, but her one piece of Coast prose⁴⁴ shows a different dimension to her work and might be read to some extent as autobiographical. The story in two chapters might have been inspired by the New Zealand Literary and Historical Association competition run by the magazine, which that year carried a three guinea prize offered by Premier Richard Seddon for the best New Zealand goldmining story; the prizewinning and runner-up stories published in the September edition were also set on the West Coast. Ridge's story concerns the marriage of Ruth Dove to a goldminer in the small community of 'Kitonga Valley' and their subsequent life on a hydraulic sluicing claim at nearby Jacob's Flat. Ruth's husband is a drunkard and her plight attracts the sympathy and attention of his mining partner who, mistaking her reaction, contrives an accident at the claim but she bravely saves her husband's life and her loyalty saves their marriage. The story has conventional themes of fidelity rewarded and a lucky strike at the mine, but the author is unflatteringly perceptive in her descriptions of the other women in the small community, who interpret Ruth's quiet, self-contained manner as aloofness and superiority, and it appears that both Ridge and Ruth are misfits on the Coast.

1918: Hunter, Edward (Billy Banjo). *Ballads of the Track*. Auckland: The Co-operative Publishing Board.

Edward J Hunter, a Scottish coalminer and active socialist who worked first at Huntly and then from 1912 at Denniston, became widely known through his column in the *Maoriland Worker* as 'Billy Banjo'. It was a clever pseudonym; the 'banjo' was a coalminer's shovel as well as a musical instrument, indicating his role as working miner and entertainer, the diminutive first name not only identifying him as an ordinary bloke and a 'mate' but

⁴³ Theresia Liemlienio Marshall, 'New Zealand Literature in the Sydney Bulletin 1880-1930,' PhD thesis, English Department, University of Auckland, 1995, 85.

⁴⁴ Lola Ridge, 'The Trial of Ruth,' *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* 1 August 1903, illustrated by the author.

evoking the boiling of the billy and the telling of yarns. His first article was a political pamphlet, *Homes and Hovels of Huntly*, which invoked the historical sense of grievance brought to New Zealand by the British miners in the late nineteenth century, but his writing became gradually more topical and lyrical. Billy Banjo's poetry was the folksong of the socialist movement, written to rally and inspire the workers rather than to record history, and he was proud of such accolades as "ilts of Liberty" and "a valuable addition to the Song-literature of Labour".⁴⁵ Fellow Scotsman Robert Hogg, who had edited the *Commonweal*, *The Maoriland Worker* in New Zealand and the *Barrier Daily Truth* in Australia before joining the staff of *New Zealand Truth*, wrote of Hunter in the preface to *Ballads of the Track* that "He can make the songs of his people songs of inspiration."⁴⁶ He refers to Hunter again in an introduction to J B Hulbert's verse, saying of both poets that their work was effective "... as folk-song meant to hearten comrades in the rough and tumble of the proletarian fight for freedom ..."⁴⁷ (Although 'song' is used figuratively, Hunter did write at least one song in New Zealand, a rallying call for the Huntly miners which was sung to the tune of 'Annie Laurie', and later in England he wrote musicals with a political message.⁴⁸) His locations are, in the main, non-specific and his poems written for British and Australian markets as well as for local readers, as evidenced in 'The Ballad of Hell's Fire Bill',⁴⁹ which has the hero shouldering his swag and "smokin there beside the gum tree" while he admires a blue-winged bird and ignores the calls of Empire and Boss. "T'were hard to find his equal from the Buller to the Clyde," Hunter affirms, raising the interesting question of exactly which bit of wide-open space Bill is occupying. Len Richardson⁵⁰ notes Hunter's enthusiasm for Australian bush ballads, his adoption of Henry Lawson's literary style in his 'Cracks at Crib Time' columns of 1913, and his approval of the many Australian books in the Huntly socialists' library. Two specific West Coast events are remembered in *Ballads of the Track*, the raising of the Red Flag at Denniston ('At the Brake' 28) and a failed strike at Blackball ('Fair Freedom's Morn' 25).

⁴⁵ Both phrases were quoted by Hunter in his foreword to *Ballads of the Track*.

⁴⁶ Robert Hogg, preface to *Ballads of the Track*.

⁴⁷ Michael Brown, 'There's a Sound of Many Voices in the Camp and on the Track: A Descriptive Analysis of Folk Music Collecting in New Zealand, 1955-1975'. M A Thesis, Victoria University, 2006, 20.

⁴⁸ Len Richardson, 'Billy Banjo: Coal Miner, Socialist, Poet and Novelist,' *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, Pat Maloney and Kerry Taylor (eds), Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002, 85.

⁴⁹ Hunter, *Ballads* 28-30

⁵⁰ Richardson, 'Billy Banjo,' 81.

1920: Hunter, Edward, aka Billy Banjo. *The Road the Men Came Home*. Lanarch: Hunter.

This novel, containing elements of autobiography and political tract within a recognisable West Coast landscape, is dedicated to “The Great Internationale of Men, Women and Bairns”. Real-life events are ‘fictionalised’ – the crib time dispute and subsequent auctioning of the miners’ possessions is transplanted from Blackball to the North Island mining camp of Shepherds Creek, for example – but the history of the New Zealand socialist movement is a constant thread. Eventually Robin and his Caledonian sweetheart Rose come to ‘Coalburnie Dale on the Never-Never Hill’ – the Coalbrookdale mining camp at Denniston – where Robin is elected chairman of the Cascade Creek miners’ committee and the New Zealand Miners’ Federation is successfully established, the fictional hero playing a greater part than the author did in real life. Much of the conflict between union and management is over safety issues and the inevitable mine accident highlights the solidarity and heroism of the workers, as well as their foresight in having their own union-funded hospital. Although there are loners like Hell’s Fire Bill amongst the men and some of the strongest characters in the novel are prostitutes, Hunter (a married father of four) is always sensitive to the culture of family and his title comes from “The glad, sad road of the miners’ birth traditions,” the generations of wives and sweethearts who watch, in hope and fear, for the return of their men. The writing is conventional and often saccharine, the style is at times reminiscent of Victorian melodrama, the characters are two-dimensional and the message is more important than the West Coast setting.

1921: Lord, E Iveagh. *Ballads of Bung : And Other Verses*. Greymouth: Printed at the Argus Company's Offices. *Revised Ballads of Bung*. Wellington: Tui Books, 1976.

The 1976 edition is a facsimile of the second revised edition of Edward Iveagh Lord’s *Ballads of Bung and other Verses*, a 16-page pamphlet published in Greymouth in 1921 and categorised in the National Library catalogue as “Drinking of alcoholic beverages – Poetry”. Both the dedication and the body of the work celebrate the locals who drink at the Recreation Hotel in High Street, an establishment still in existence, by naming key characters and recalling key events such as the 1921 send-off for ironmonger George

McKay who was leaving the district. An alphabetical register of some 50 regulars follows the traditional Yorkshire folk song form of 'Tour of the Dales', identifying each man, including the author, with a comical reference gauged to entertain those in the know. The 'revision' in the second edition was the addition of 'Stunology', a two-page evocation in rhyming couplets of all the current phrases to describe inebriation in its various forms. Greymouth-born Lord had a brief career as a civil engineer before returning to his home town to set up business as a surveyor, secretary and public agent. He is best known for his 258-page West Coast history *Old Westland : a story of the golden west coast of the South Island of New Zealand known to the Maori as Te Wai Pounamu (the waters (or place) of greenstone)*, published by Whitcombe & Tombs in 1940 and since reprinted in facsimile (Capper Press 1976; Kiwi 1999). He also wrote *Greymouth State School Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (Greymouth: Greymouth State School, 1926), *Greymouth District Diamond Jubilee 1868-1928* (Christchurch: Andrews & Baty, 1928) and *Westland to-Day : Land of Natural Wealth and Opportunity : A Handbook of Information for Investors, Settlers, Tourists and Traders* (Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1940). Lord features as a character in Eric Beardsley's *Blackball* 08.

1923: Smith, Hugh. *Poems by an Ayrshire Scot*. Dunedin: Coulls Somerville Wilkie.

Hugh Smith came to New Zealand in 1875 as a young widower from Kilmarnock in Scotland and, after working the summer as a shearing cook, made his way to the Coast where he became a baker at Ahaura and later at Reefton. A fiddler and a poet, he quickly became popular as an entertainer, and met his second wife when they sang together at a benefit concert for the local hospital. Smith was later known as 'The Bard of Inangahua' but he first bestowed that title upon Cornelius O'Regan in his poem 'To the Memory of C J O'Regan' (116)⁵¹; like O'Regan, Smith began writing poetry in his teens; much of his early verse is sentimental and refers back to his Scottish family or to romances of his youth, but there are robust descriptions of the landscape and plenty of Coast stories, such as 'Jack the Fiddler' (63), 'Paddy Connor's Yarn' (126), 'The Old Time Pioneers' (22), 'Blackball Pipers' (253) and 'A Tribute' (148) which honours "Mrs Milne, of Granity". Probably the best-known and most often quoted of Smith's poems is 'Biddy of the Buller' (259); Lyell

⁵¹ "And sons and grey-hair'd sires will long regard/His name with pride – Inangahua's bard."

goldminer Biddy Goodwin died in Reefton in 1899 but the Smiths knew her personally and this ode written after her death is both fond and compassionate. He wrote occasional poetry as well as nostalgic verse, commemorating local heroes and events such as the 'Inangahua Goldfields Jubilee' (81) and the 1920 visit of the Prince of Wales (who "gratefully and pleasingly acknowledged receipt of the following ... " p111). He wrote an ode 'To the Bereaved at Brunner' (32) after the 1896 mine disaster, and when a Scots piper died bravely at Calcutta the following year *Greymouth Evening Star* editor J Petrie cabled Smith to "Send us a sonnet" and the bard obliged. *Poems by an Ayrshire Scot* was published in Dunedin and sold by the author, who took a stall at the Hokitika Exhibition and later at the Dunedin Exhibition of 1926. A second edition was printed in Nelson in 1932, and by 1940 he had sold 2,000 copies.⁵²

1926: Kirk, Henry. *The Transport Workers' Song Book*. Wellington: New Zealand Worker Printers.

Greymouth wharfinger and poet Henry Kirk, who wrote as 'The Mixer', was a member of the Watersiders' Union until his death in 1933 and his work reflects not only the broadened attitudes of the union movement but a return to grassroots philosophies. By the 1920s he was able to express the loyalty and interdependence of the coalminers in terms of the union movement as a whole, including firemen, sailors and wharfies in his assertion that: "If a man stands by his Union....He's jake!" (86-7). Ian Wedde identifies Kirk as the most notable of the poets writing from the working movement, pushing his poems and songs "well past the limits of conventions." that braked other socialists of his era.⁵³ In his poem 'The Man Behind' (21) Kirk derides the union officials who wear "like a ticket on a goat – /a badge of Red Fed servitude", and he rails against "the profit-grinders/ who control this Massey-land.." (28), but his work is poetry before polemic; he writes movingly of the men who died in World War One, and paints vivid word pictures of the Greymouth wharf and the characters who worked it. Wedde further notes that "... the unapologetic language of 'The Mixer', in particular, relishes its frequent literary references and pastiches without

⁵² Berta Sinclair Burns (ed), *The Poetical Works of Hugh Smith*, Auckland: Unity Press 1946, 14.

⁵³ Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen (eds), *The Penguin Book of NZ Verse*, Auckland: Penguin, 1985, 21-52.

unease or condescension.”⁵⁴ There are echoes of Charles Thatcher ‘taking down the nobs’ in Kirk’s satirical piece, ‘Society Notes’ (72-3) which pokes literary fun at the way the ‘snob press’ wrote about the 1920 royal visit; as Bullocky Bill, Liverpool Mick and the other old watersiders Kirk remembers in ‘The Stringer’ (31) would say; “Spare me days and stone the crows”. The wry, self-deprecating humour that is one of the traits of later Coast fiction begins to show in Kirk’s work, for example when he stands on the dimly-lit wharf at midnight and “wondered why in the name of man/I was out at such an hour (53), and when he mocks the idea that all men are considered equal – “You’re a wharfie. That’s enough!” (43) Many of the poems in this collection were apparently first published in union newsletters and journals.

1927: Devanny, Jean. *Old Savage and Other Stories*. London: Duckworth.

This short story collection follows the themes of sexual and racial equality and socialist ideology evidenced in Devanny’s first novel *The Butcher Shop*⁵⁵, and foreshadows her later work; while some of the stories are universal, others have recognisable Golden Bay, Marlborough or West Coast elements. ‘The Woman’ and ‘Mrs Salgast’s Baby’⁵⁶ are set at Tai Tapu on West Whanganui inlet at the top of the Coast, where Devanny’s father worked for some time, and refer to the physical isolation and hardship of that environment. ‘Old Savage’ is set in western Golden Bay, ‘Roy Phipps and his wife Feodora’ is set at Puponga and two of the stories, ‘Her Big Idea’ and ‘The Perfect Mother’ are set at Millerton on the West Coast and set up the themes of her later novel *Poor Swine*.

1928: Devanny, Jean. *Dawn Beloved*. New York: Macaulay.

Best known for *The Butcher Shop*, published in 1926 and later banned in New Zealand, for its accurate but unpalatable description of castrating ram lambs, and a number of other countries for its equally unpalatable advocacy of women’s sexual freedom, Devanny was born and brought up in Golden Bay and later moved to Australia, where the bulk of her work was written. This first novel (written before *The Butcher Shop* but published after) is recognisably autobiographical, covering her childhood and education at Ferntown, marriage

⁵⁴ Wedde 21-52.

⁵⁵ Jean Devanny, *The Butcher Shop*. London: Duckworth, 1926.

⁵⁶ First published in *The Sun*, London, also in *New Coterie*, 4 (1926): 28-40.

to a coalminer and move to Puponga where she became a socialist. The themes of this feminist romance are political and sexual freedom and the book is significant in West Coast terms because it documents the movement of socialist ideas from one coalmine to another, describes key people in the union movement and addresses issues of sexuality (including descriptions of abortion and childbirth which were subjects not usually mentioned in literature at the time) in describing the life of a coalminer's wife.

1930: Devanny, Jean. *Bushman Burke*. New York: Macaulay.

Set partly in the timber town of Parkeston between Golden Bay and West Whanganui at the top of the Coast and partly in Wellington, this novel uses local characters and Devanny's own experience to accurately portray the physical and social environment of a West Coast logging community. Unusually in Devanny's work the central romance, involving a wealthy but naive bushman manipulated into marrying a sexually sophisticated, money-hungry and shallow city girl, has a conventional if somewhat strained 'happy ending' when she follows him back to his bush camp and is won over to his lifestyle and values. Like her other New Zealand novels, *Bushman Burke* is an attack on puritanism, although it is less militantly socialist than some of her other work, and there is a conscious respect for Maori culture, albeit focussed on an idealised Wellington intellectual society rather than the working environment of the Coast. Critic Joan Stevens comments that Devanny lacks technical skill but *Bushman Burke* is "still perhaps worth looking at".⁵⁷ *Bushman Burke* was also released as *Devil Made Saint* (London: Duckworth, 1930) and, in abridged form, as *Taipo* (Sydney: Frank Johnson, 1944).

1932: Devanny, Jean. *Poor Swine*. London: Duckworth.

This is the rarest of Devanny's New Zealand novels, which are all difficult to access (except *The Butcher Shop*, which was republished by Oxford University Press in 1981). Only two copies of *Poor Swine* have been found in public library systems in New Zealand and the book is virtually unknown on the West Coast where it is set in the coal-mining community of Denniston in the 1930s, where "on those mountain tops of waste and clay

⁵⁷ Joan Stevens, *The New Zealand Novel 1860-1965*, Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1966, 39.

and rock and bog lived the miners of the coast.”⁵⁸ Devanny deliberately challenges conventional values by introducing promiscuous Lilian Sweet as a child of nature with beauty, innocence and youth, a “lily that lay on the sand” (10) whose great talent is to imitate the natural calls of the birds in the bush. Her voice becomes a mating call when she aspires to rise above the closed, limited opportunities of the coal-mining community and provide for herself and her children by trading sex for money, pushing Devanny’s socialist agenda by challenging the convention of monogamous marriage. This is a forgotten forerunner to Jenny Patrick’s later and much more successful use of Denniston as a setting for Coast fiction⁵⁹, but has the authenticity of personal experience; the author was not only a coal-miner’s wife, familiar with such communities, but was intellectually aware of the tensions and politics of the Coast.

1934: Simpson, Norah M. *Fairy Tales of Westland*. Greymouth: Greymouth Evening Star.

This book is described in the National Library of New Zealand catalogue as children’s fairy stories; only one copy appears to exist in the library system and I have been unable to access it. The six stories are; Fairy Foxgloves, The Jerrymariah Trees, Rangitane and the Magic Mandolin, The Magic Tree at Greenstone, The Kahikatea Fairies and The White Blackbird. Simpson also wrote a poem, ‘Give me these gifts’ (“Trees, standing still and black and straight against a saffron sky ... ”), published in NZ Railways Magazine Vol 8 issue 7, 1933.

1943: Burdon, R. M. *Outlaw’s Progress*. Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society.

Randall Mathews Burdon was a Canterbury sheep farmer, best known as a biographer and historian, who later wrote a biography of West Coaster Richard John Seddon.⁶⁰ *Outlaw’s Progress*, his fourth publication and only novel, is set in a fictitious town in inland Canterbury in the 1920s; the main protagonist, a struggling farmer whose wife is ill and who is heavily in debt, shoots dead a police sergeant, takes to the bush and evades his

⁵⁸ Devanny, *Poor Swine*, 15.

⁵⁹ Jenny Patrick, *The Denniston Rose*. Auckland: Black Swan, 2003.

⁶⁰ R M Burden, *King Dick: a biography of Richard John Seddon*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1955.

captors for several days until he is fatally wounded. Like Stanley Graham whose story inspired the author, Owen Marley is a crack shot but a poor businessman whose marginal land and lack of working capital eventually defeat him. His role as victim is pointed up by a friend who smuggles food to him, milks his cow and eventually leads the police to him, but is left pondering the injustice of an economic structure that oppresses the weak. This is a tract with a socialist message, written and published soon after Stanley Graham's death in October 1941 and reflecting the deep national impact of the event; through his minor characters the author speculates on the way different attitudes and values might have contributed to another outcome. Neither the author nor the setting is of the Coast but the book is included in this bibliography because of its basis in the events at Kowhitirangi.

1945: Hardie, Duncan. *Stray Thoughts: Poems*. Christchurch: Caxton Press.

Duncan Hardie came to the Coast with his Scots parents as an infant in 1910 and spent most of his life there, representing his district in rugby, athletics and swimming and working in the manufacturing and timber industries. His first poetry was published in Westport and he also broadcast on Greymouth 3YZ and lectured to writing groups. His poetry is reflective, scenery-focussed and often spiritual, written for individual rather than collective pleasure. 'The Old Pioneer' (8), for example, is generic rather than specific, as is 'Rainy Day' (15) where "Skies are clouded/Hills are shrouded ... " Only in 'The Tui's Song' (20) and 'Buller' (27) is there visually-evocative description. *Stray Thoughts* (32pp, 48 poems) was first published by the *Westport News* and reviewed by Pat Lawlor in 1936. "There is sincerity in the verses," Lawlor concluded. "Nothing here for future anthologies, but that is no disgrace for the writer."⁶¹

1946: Smith, H. and B. S. Burns (ed). *The Poetical Works of Hugh Smith (The Bard of Inangahua)*. Auckland: Unity Press.

This comprehensive collection (400 poems) of Smith's work was edited by Berta Sinclair Burns, who got to know him during her frequent visits to the Coast as 'Aunt Hilda' of the *Christchurch Star* newspaper, and published after his death by his son Hugh Smith. After

⁶¹ Shibli Bagarag, 'Among the Books,' *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Volume 11, Issue 8 (November 2, 1936), 63

his second wife died in 1920 the poet moved to Inangahua where he built a cottage on rented land near the railway station, planted an oak tree and continued to write and perform as 'the Bard of Inangahua' wearing his trademark Scottish kilt and Balmoral bonnet. His nostalgic Scottish poem 'The Wee Hoose at Hame' (193), which he set to music and performed frequently, was later published in an arrangement by Audrey Gibbon Foster. The author's 'wee hoose' at Inangahua was accidentally burned down in 1943, the year before the poet's death at the age of 93, and replaced by 'grateful well-wishers': a plaque now marks the spot where it stood. That Smith was a fan of his compatriot Robbie Burns is evident not only in his musical verse forms, his comic humour and his sympathy for the working man, but in his frequent references, from the 1896 'Scotland's Bard' (33) and 'Centenary of the Death of Robert Burns' (73) to the 1937 'Denniston Burns' Supper' (257), to the more famous Ayrshire bard. Smith's later poems include political commentary and, inevitably, laments on his advancing years; always an entertainer and for many years a public personality, he took wry issue (306) with writer Pat Lawlor, who wrote for *NZ Railways Magazine* under the nom de plume 'Shibli Bagarag', for telling the world that he was 81 years old and thus destroying his hopes of romantic entanglements with various younger women.

1947: Northcroft, R. A. *Winks in Westland : a fantasy from the New Zealand bush*. Wellington: Democracy Pub. Co, 1947.

This story was inspired by author Ruth Northcroft's childhood visits to a family farm at Whataroa,⁶² and recalls the South Westland bush through the eyes of Winks, an eight-year-old English girl who summons an elf called Raindrop by rubbing a piece of greenstone. The conventions of an English fairy story are juxtaposed with indigenous flora and fauna as the elf takes Winks riding on huhu beetles and moths, shows her morepork, rata vines and glow-worms, and gets the insects to dance for her. Winks responds with the Highland Fling and leaves for England with her teddy bears Toast and Orangeface. Maori names are used only where there is no English equivalent; the descriptions are of local bush but the few illustrations are ambivalent. Northcroft wrote one other children's story, involving

⁶² George Roberts Northcroft, who lived at Whataroa in 1908, married Alice Dorothy Bogle in 1926 and there are photographs of 'Dorothy and Ruth Northcroft' visiting gold prospectors in the area in the 1930s. Ruth was born in 1914 and her mother died when she was 4. Her son was Charlie Northcroft.

rabbits, before pursuing her interests as an artist and collector of water lilies: she later moved to Australia.

1949: De Mauny, Erik de. *The Huntsman in his Career*. London: Lindsay Drummond.

Included in this bibliography because it was inspired by the Stanley Graham story, this novel is set in the fictional village of Pemberton in the lower North Island where an army manhunt is under way for the fugitive, a dairy farmer named Milsom whose financial and domestic difficulties have driven him to shoot an implement salesman trying to collect overdue payments. The narrator, a left-leaning Wellington journalist who has recently enlisted to fight in World War Two, is assigned with other soldiers to join the hunt and it is he who eventually shoots Milsom. De Mauny, who was brought up in Wellington and went on to a distinguished career as a BBC war correspondent, may well have covered the Stanley Graham manhunt as a news journalist; although there is no overt reference to the connection nor to the West Coast environment, the back stories for Milsom and his wife and for the hero Peter Villiers are an attempt to explain and understand the political and psychological pressures on those involved. This has been considered as an existentialist novel of the *Man Alone* genre but the author makes the connection with the physical landscape, identifying the catalyst as “One of those spasmodic, meaningless gestures of violence which you find sometimes in a place like this People think we’re civilised ... but we’re not really. The wildness weighs against us, the aeons of geological time.”(27)

1951: Lawson, Will. *Gold in their Hearts*. Sydney, Invincible Press, 1951. Re-published as *Mary Smith's Hotel*. Sydney: Halstead Press, 1957.

The real Mary Smith was born in England as Mary McGee, arrived in Westland around 1859 and appears to have been widowed or abandoned soon after her only child Thomas Harrington ‘Waimea’ Smith was born at the goldfield settlement of Waimea north of Hokitika.⁶³ Mary Smith opened her first hotel at Broomielaw Creek, near Charleston, in 1869 and the following year moved to the West Coast Hotel at Charleston where she lived for the rest of her life, becoming a successful hotel keeper and property owner and sending

⁶³ Jim Smith, *About Mary Smith c1831-1912*, Tuross Head NSW: J Smith, 2006.

her son to Dunedin High School. She died at Charleston in 1912 at the age of 80. Writer Will Lawson uses her name and personality, along with those of Dick Seddon and other iconic Coast characters, in this romantic historical novel which blends fact and fiction to provide a glimpse of Charleston in the late nineteenth century. Twenty passengers from Melbourne, including a group of young casino girls contracted to work for a year before marrying, embark from their steamer into surfboats to be landed at Constant Bay, but only nineteen make it ashore: a mining engineer is drowned, his young wife is traumatised by shock and their infant son, nicknamed Christopher Columbus, is adopted by the miners and raised at Mary Smith's Hotel. He becomes a mascot and a symbol of hope for Charleston, which is gradually dying as the gold thins out and the miners move on. The author has mined local information from old newspapers and acknowledges historians Faris⁶⁴ and Lord⁶⁵ for the authenticity of detail in the story, which begins in the early 1870s and features horseracing, boxing and provincial politics. Lawson was an Australian freelance writer based in Wellington in 1919, when he published *The wonderful West Coast of New Zealand*, and *Across marble mountains : by motor car to Cape Farewell, New Zealand*. He was prolific on both sides of the Tasman, publishing a number of travel guides, histories and collections of verse, and his other novels include *Our Lady of the Heather*, based on a legend about the Auckland Islands, *Black Diamonds*, about a coalmining community in New South Wales, and *Forbidden Gold*, about a goldmining venture in the hills behind Wellington.

1953: Eden, Dorothy. *Lamb to the Slaughter*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Dorothy Eden (1912-1982) was a Canterbury legal secretary who published eleven novels with New Zealand settings before moving to England in 1954 to become a full-time writer. She continued to write prolifically in the historical, suspense and Gothic genres and published 43 novels, two of them as Mary Paradise, with New Zealand, British, Canadian and Australian settings, as well as producing short stories and articles for *NZ Mirror*, *Redbook* and *Good Housekeeping* magazines. *Lamb to the Slaughter*, her tenth book, is set

⁶⁴ Irwin Faris, *Charleston, its rise and decline*, Wellington: A H & A W Reed, 1941 (Capper Press facsimile edition 1980).

⁶⁵ E Iveagh Lord, *Old Westland*, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1940.

in South Westland near Franz Josef glacier, where a young actress named Alice is invited to stay with her schoolteacher friend Camilla but arrives to find her mysteriously missing. Alice becomes involved with each of the three men who knew Camilla and in classic Gothic tradition enters a destabilised world of “polarised gender relations, suffused with male violence or the threat of violence”⁶⁶ as she suspects each in turn of murder and struggles to ‘read’ their characters and intentions. One of the men has a repressed and frightened adult daughter, another a beautiful but tragically mad sister, there is a talking magpie uncannily like Poe’s raven, there are frights and flights in the night, and when Alice is mesmerised into an engagement with the murderer she discovers the wedding dresses of previous victims. The location is ostensibly a tourist resort but the landscape, with the isolation of house and cottage emphasized by the icy wildness of Franz Josef glacier and a mysteriously deep mountain lake, proves as sinister as the characters; the deaths of Camilla and eventually her murderer are implicitly linked to the environment itself.

1953: Glover, Denis. *Arawata Bill, a sequence of poems*. Christchurch: Pegasus Press.

William O’Leary (1865-1947) was a consummate bushman who spent over forty years in South Westland, first as a ferryman on the Waitoto River and later prospecting for gold in the Arawata valley which drains into Jackson Bay. He was born and brought up on the Otago goldfields and retired to Dunedin in his seventies but his heart was in South Westland, where he searched unsuccessfully for treasure cached by earlier miners and where his survival skills and his preference for working alone with a pack horse made him something of a legend. Glover’s *Arawata Bill* sequence was inspired by his friend John Pascoe, with whom he had frequently climbed in the Southern Alps, who told him about finding traces of O’Leary’s wanderings in the years after his death.⁶⁷ Glover’s own familiarity with the inhospitable alpine terrain he describes and his succinct references to O’Leary’s character and habits give the poems immediate authority, but the success of the work, which not only attracted attention in the literary world as the author’s best work to date but sold out its first edition in two weeks, indicates that its appeal was in Glover’s

⁶⁶ Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (eds), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, 158

⁶⁷ Sarah Shieff, ‘Denis Glover 1912-1980’, in *Kōtare 2008*, Special Issue — Essays in New Zealand Literary Biography Series Three: ‘The Early Poets’.

adroit blending of poetic and colloquial voice and sympathetic irony, and the successful execution of his intention to represent “all the great unknown explorers, prospectors, even mountaineers, who have been looking for something intangible round the next bend”.⁶⁸ Optimism in the face of hardship has always been a feature of human endeavour in South Westland; Glover sums it up in *Arawata Bill* as “Wicked country, but there might be/Gold in it for all that...” (12).

1956: Skades, Kathleen. *O Matau Waiata*. Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur Stockwell Ltd.

This privately-published 24-page poetry collection explores nostalgic and romanticised themes in poems such as ‘Reverie of a Gold-Digger’s Son’ (“When I was eight/Bush fragrance soothed the air/Around our cottage...”), ‘Taramakau Valley, 1953’, and a tragic love poem ‘In the Valley of the Song Birds’ which has a “dusky maiden” fall for a pakeha bushman who dies in a forest accident. The emphasis is on lovely valleys, lovely views, and bold, virile people wrestling yellow wealth from the land. “ ... What’s important, is that we must/keep unsullied Westland’s name.”

1959: Hardie, Duncan. *Musings*. Wellington: Capricorn Press.

Hardie’s second volume of poetry (64pp) returns to some of his earlier themes, but is more specific in its subjects and more retrospective in its reflections. ‘West Coast’ (54) and ‘Punakaikai Pancake Rocks’ (13) discuss the sublime effect of fierce natural forces, while ‘Pioneer’s Grave’ (58) hints at the futility and disappointment of gold seekers defeated by the elements. In ‘The Play’ (49-51) he reflects on the role of writer, commentator and critic, asking “And does it really matter/When the fog comes down/on forest hills ... ” Hardie’s work was known on the Coast, largely through his radio broadcasts and lectures on writing, but made little impact elsewhere.

1959: Hobbs, Leslie. *The Wild West Coast*. Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs.

Hobbs worked on the Coast as a journalist and wrote stories for the *Evening Post* under the pseudonym ‘Mawhera’. This collection of apocryphal Coast anecdotes, garnered from old

⁶⁸ Glover in a letter to John Pascoe, quoted by Shieff from Ogilvie, Gordon. *Denis Glover, his life*. Auckland: Godwit, 1999.

newspapers, histories and pub yarns, is loosely divided by subject and designed to perpetuate and capitalise on the myths surrounding racing, gambling, the police, the press, the Irish, and the pubs. It is a fond summary of the legendary Coast character and reinforces the idea that things are done differently there. Hobbs covered the 1941 Stanley Graham manhunt as a journalist for *The Press*,⁶⁹ but does not mention this in his book. He later served in the Second World War and wrote a memoir about the Italy campaign⁷⁰, and also wrote the introduction to a book of West Coast photographs.⁷¹

1960: Skates, Kate. *The Fadeless Fern*. Westland Centenary 1860-1960. Christchurch: Davey's Publications, 1960.

This poetry collection records old identities, places and events; Poenamu, Thomas Brunner, Maori Point, Father Roland, a storm at Greenstone (where in March 1892 a dam burst and a number of people died). Similarities of name and style led to speculation that the author also wrote the poems in *O Matau Waiata* (Skades, Kathleen. Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur Stockwell Ltd, 1956).

1960: Mason, Henrietta. *Fool's Gold*. London: Robert Hale.

This romantic novel, the first of a trilogy following the fortunes of a family on a high country South Island sheep station⁷², is set in Hokitika and Wellington in 1865 with a preface claiming it was a diary left by the author's great grandmother. Bridget Gereham is en route to Wellington on the ship *William and Mary* but goes ashore in Hokitika, disguises herself as a man and heads south to the Kaniere diggings in company with an inexperienced couple who need someone to drive their wagon. She stakes a claim and works it, watched over by fellow passenger John Spencer, who is aware of her identity and falls in love with her. She becomes ill and staggers back to Hokitika, where Spencer forces her to reclaim her identity and sail for Wellington without her gold, which she is convinced was stolen from her. She is accepted in society, courted by a whaling station owner and sought out by John Spencer's estranged 'wife' who is revealed as a crazed bigamist. Bridget returns to

⁶⁹ Howard Willis, *Bad Blood*, Auckland: William Collins, 1981, 166

⁷⁰ Leslie Hobbs, *Kiwi Down the Strada*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1963.

⁷¹ V C Brown and Leslie Hobbs, *The Coast*, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1962.

⁷² Henrietta Mason, *Our Hills Cry Woe* (London: Robert Hale, 1963), *High Acres* (Christchurch, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1966).

Hokitika to retrieve her gold, which is mostly pyrites and worth little, and reunites with Spencer, who has entered Parliament to fight against land monopolies. The book contrasts stereotyped goals, behaviours and expectations of colonial ‘society’ with the equally stereotyped camaraderie of the diggings, where honest hardworking miners protect themselves and each other against rogues and thieves. The convention of a woman who disguises herself as a man is commonplace in goldfields fiction and has some basis in historical fact, although women miners were also known on the Coast. Henrietta Mason was born and educated in New Zealand but worked most of her life overseas, first in the New Hebrides and then at Columbia University in New York, before returning about the time this book was published. She previously wrote as Etta Mason.⁷³

1962: Bruno, Frank. *Fury at Finnegan’s Folly*. London: Robert Hale / Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs.

The cover blurb tells it all: “Finnegan’s Folly was a mushroom, gold-boom town on New Zealand’s wild west coast in 1861...” ‘Frank Bruno’ was the pseudonym of Sydney-born Albert Francis St Bruno, whose yarns and stories, many from his service in the desert in the Second World War, first appeared in the *Auckland Weekly News* and were published in book form by Wright & Jacques in the late 1940s. The first of his action novels, *High Noon at Ngutu*, was published by Robert Hale in 1960 and there followed a string of titles such as *Yellow Jack’s Island*, each with recognisable New Zealand settings adding colour to the formulaic plots which derive from the American ‘westerns’. This one is set on the Hokitika goldfields, where a former British Army doctor turned itinerant gold-seeker is summoned from Otago by a mysterious message from an old friend who has struck it lucky near Okatika. In the first of a string of coincidences that constitute the plot, he is nearly drowned in the flooded Taramakau River and finds the garrotted body of his friend washed up at his feet. Attacked by bush rangers a few days later, he is himself thrown into the river to wash up more dead than alive at the gold claim worked by his dead friend’s daughter and her Irish uncle, the local moonshiner. This novel uses every cliché: a wise Irish priest urges calm, the hotel saloons are full of madams and bar girls, the town newspaper is published by an educated drunkard who recites poetry for free drinks, and the villains are led by piano

⁷³ Pauline Neale and Roger Robinson, *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, 365

player 'Blind Melody', who has a score to settle with the hero after a previous clash on the Californian goldfields. The language also leans heavily on the Western genre: "Coloured like dark leather, the sodden sky sagged down..." (7), while in the saloons there are "light-footed laughing lizard-eyed ladies"(33). Local colour is added with references to the Kelly and Burgess gang, the Fenian riots, the gold escort and the cosmopolitan population. "In its glorious hour, Finnegan's Folly resounded with a babel of accents and languages: as if all the bellyaches of human society had rushed the diggings, high, wide and unhandsome. Irish – the West Coast was full of them – Chinese, French-Canadians ... Americans and Australians and Germans and Englishmen ... white and brown and yellow men ... hard-eyed, close-mouthed men ..." (67) The violence is notable; men are garrotted and have their throats cut, a bar girl is raped and murdered, a Maori miner wrongly accused of theft narrowly escapes being lynched, and a brothel-keeper called Melbourne Meg slugs it out with one of the villains until her rival 'the Dark Dago' helps out by stabbing him. The town is set alight and, in a final showdown, 'Blind Melody' reveals himself before he dies to be Merry's long-vanished father. The remains of the gang are tarred and feathered, the heroes and heroines pair off and the town is restored to harmony and happiness. Bruno learned his craft freelancing for newspapers on both sides of the Tasman.⁷⁴

1960: Rouseabouts and Elsie Locke. *Ghosts on the Coast : a family fantasy with the Rouseabouts*. Produced by Joe Martin. (Programme: Clarity Press).

The Rouseabouts were a folk music group associated with the William Morris Group in Christchurch and they performed this musical drama on the Coast October 29 to November 5, 1960, with a cast of travelling players that included Elsie and Jack Locke and Dick Austin.⁷⁵ Locke wrote the script and collected folk songs by various writers which were included in the production, loosely based on the social and political history of the Coast but incorporating music and anecdotes from other parts of New Zealand.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Marsden and Roger Robinson, *Oxford Companion* 75

⁷⁵ Rouseabouts and Elsie Locke. 'Ghosts on the Coast : a family fantasy with the Rouseabouts,' Dick Austin, Papers relating to the Rouseabouts, Tapuhi MS-Papers-8049, Alexander Turnbull Library.

1962: Crump, Barry, and Dennis Turner. *One of Us*. Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed.

The third book by Barry Crump, the second to feature Sam Cash and the first to mention the West Coast, this loosely-connected narrative involves three drifters on a road trip that covers Picton, Murchison, Christchurch, Westport and Hokitika. Dennis Turner's sketch of Sam Cash in a West Coast pub (97) prefaces the rare story of a surly publican who short-changes his clients and duly gets his come-uppance. The three adventurers duly find themselves on a run-down and shambolic farm south of Hokitika, where peculiar acts of sabotage and vandalism occur until they are paid to leave, and hitch a ride north with a former whitebaiter and Ministry of Works driver. The title comes from the mutual recognition of the main characters who are inevitably hapless, shy of work, full of blarney and always ready to move on. Crump received the Hubert Church Award for this book which was broadcast on radio in 13 episodes read by the author.⁷⁶ It was reprinted in 1962 and 1963 by Reed, published in paperback in Australia (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1968) and new editions were published in 1992 (Opotiki: Barry Crump Associates, 1992) and 1997 (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1994, reprint Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1997). Extracts were published in *The Best of Crump* (Auckland: Crump Productions, 1974) and *Barry Crump's Bedtime Yarns* (Auckland: Barry Crump Associates, 1988)

1963: Pearson, Bill. *Coal Flat*. Auckland: Longman Paul.

**Digital edition Wellington, New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2004,
<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-PeaCoal.html>**

The son of a railwayman, Pearson was brought up on the Coast and educated at Greymouth Technical High School, where, inspired by mentor and passionate conservationist Ted Kehoe, he began writing environmentally-themed short stories for Aunt Hilda's page in the *Christchurch Star-Sun*⁷⁷. He developed his literary interests and skills at Teachers' Training College in Dunedin and later at Canterbury University College, wrote *Coal Flat* while working on his doctorate in London in the early 1950s, and returned to join the faculty at Auckland University. Short stories with a Coast setting include 'Uncle 52', (first

⁷⁶ Rowan Gibb, 'Barry Crump, a bibliography,' *Kotare* 2001, vol 4. No 2.

⁷⁷ Bill Pearson, West Coast stories published in Aunt Hilda's Children's Page, *Christchurch Star-Sun*: 'The Man Who Saved the Birds', 29 June 1935; 'The Mystery Pacific Isle', 23 August 1935; 'Unity is Strength', 6 March 1936. From Millar 41-3.

published in *Book*, no 9, Christchurch: Caxton, July 1947, reprinted in *Six Stories*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991, pp. 23-29) and 'Babes in the Bush', first published in *New Story*, Paris, no 3, pp 5-39 and reprinted in *Six Stories* (49-81). His only novel, *Coal Flat* is set at a place very like Blackball (where he worked as a teacher early in the Second World War) in 1947 (when he worked underground for five weeks at the Brunner mine after his teaching career had been interrupted by war service); when it was published nearly twenty years later it created interest and debate not only in literary circles, where it was generally perceived as an important New Zealand novel because of its authenticity of voice⁷⁸, but also on the Coast, where there was speculation about who the main characters were modelled on. The novel raises issues of race, socialism, unionism and Catholicism. Although Pearson never lived on the Coast after 1949, his ashes were buried in his parents' grave in Greymouth and some privately scattered at Greymouth High School.⁷⁹ In 2011 the Grey District Council installed an illustrated panel outside the public library commemorating Pearson's contribution to New Zealand literary studies as "one of Greymouth's most illustrious sons."

1964: Eastwood, Oswald William. *The Folk Down South and Sundry Other Rhymes*. Cobden: Eastwood.

Born 1886 in Christchurch, Eastwood was an accountant in Greymouth from the late 1930s. He was regularly published in the *Greymouth Evening Star* as 'Itawuti' (poetry) and 'The Kotuku' (commentary), and there is a strong element of nostalgia in his books, the last two published from a Christchurch retirement home. Many of his poems have a religious theme; others such as 'Weatherwise' (15) and 'Cobden Beach' (16) praise scenery and sunsets. The people of South Westland are eulogised in the title poem 'The Folk Down South' (6-18), in which they treat a wandering stranger so well that when he dreams he has died and gone to heaven, St Peter opens a special greenstone door and reunites him with his South Westland friends whose particular job is teaching the angels how to behave.

⁷⁸ Paul Millar, *No Fretful Sleeper; a life of Bill Pearson*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2010, 264-268

⁷⁹ Millar, *No Fretful Sleeper* 341.

1964: Hooper, Peter. *A Map of Morning*. Christchurch: Pegasus.

This first book of poems by Hedley Colwill (Peter) Hooper is mostly set in England, where he was born and where he returned in 1961 during a pilgrimage to his brother Tony's World War Two grave in Italy. Hooper taught English at Greymouth High School and broadcast a monthly book review session on Greymouth radio 3YZ, and while he was in London he attended seminars and a poetry festival. This collection, which is loosely shaped to describe his journey and experiences within the larger framework of nature and its cycles suggested by the title poem, includes three poems to Chinese poet Po Chu I, whose work inspired him in the building of his garden at Paroa. 'Thoughts of Westland from London' ("Why is it that my heart today/opens to beauty, floods and fills,/leaps in the flume of silver spray,/bows to the purity of hills..." 14) and 'Coast Road' (38), in which he reflects on the "terrible" beauty and loneliness of the Westland hills, point up the dilemma of the rural intellectual. The last poem in the collection, 'Faraway' (50), was set to music by Ronald Dellow in 1990.⁸⁰

1964: O'Shea, John. *Runaway*. Pacific Films.

This production has become iconic because of its sparsely dramatic black and white portrayal of contemporary New Zealand character and scenery. Billed as an 'angry young man in a hurry' movie in the American genre, *Runaway* "is really an English-speaking continental film"⁸¹ which marks a coming-of-age in the industry. Appearances by Selwyn Muru, Kiri Te Kanawa, Ray Columbus and Barry Crump (who plays a West Coast 'hard man') helped the film's marketability in its day but fail to overshadow the central dilemma of David Manning, whose poor moral choices lead him from Auckland to Hokianga, down to Christchurch in a stolen car and finally over the Southern Alps to South Westland as a man on the run. Manning is returning to his roots and tells Diana, the woman he picks up on the road, that, "No one pretends over there." Unlike Joe Driscoll, Stanley Graham and other hard men who went bush in South Westland, however, he depends on mental rather than physical survival skills and chooses to be metaphorically "swallowed by the bush", in

⁸⁰ Ronald Graeme Dellow, 'Faraway, for voice and piano'. Alexander Turnbull Library (MS-Papers-8779-034)

⁸¹ F.A.J., 'Young Man on the Run,' *New Zealand Listener*, 6 November 1964, 16.

his case lost in the icy wilderness of the glaciers, rather than living with his mistakes. Superb camera work emphasises the emotional impact of the Coast landscape as a sublime influence on the main characters, diminishing ‘civilised’ responses and heightening their propensities towards violence.

1965: McCarrigan, Elizabeth, *Varied Verses*. Greymouth: Grey River Argus

Peter Hooper wrote the foreword for this collection, printed by the *Grey River Argus*, which includes the lyrics for ‘Centennial Hymn’, the official song of the 1960 Westland celebrations; “Sing a song of forests, cleared for man to live:/We must keep replanting for our soil to thrive”. The six Coast poems in the collection are all in similar vein, heavy with colonial sentiment. McCarrigan (née Morrison) was a University of Canterbury graduate and lecturer who taught mathematics in London before settling in Greymouth where she eventually headed the West Coast branch of the School Library Service. She was passionately interested in choral music and many of her poems were set to music or written as songs. The collection includes ‘Song of Westland’, and ‘Two Women of Westland’; the latter, which compares the lifestyles of women on the Coast in 1860 and 1960, was written for and first published in the National Council of Women centennial book *Women of Westland* (7).⁸²

1965: Colquhoun, Neil. *New Zealand Folk Songs*. Auckland: W.E.A.

This 32-page booklet includes the words and music of ‘Down in the Brunner Mine’ (58), anonymously written about the 1896 disaster in which 65 men died, also ‘Digger’s Farewell’ (36) an 1874 poem for which he wrote the music⁸³, an adaptation of Thatcher’s ‘New Chums at the Diggings’ (32), and Colquhoun’s own ‘Murderer’s Rock’ (41) about the Burgess and Kelly gang. Colquhoun was prominent in the Auckland folk music scene and was responsible, along with Phil Garland, for reviving several West Coast folk songs which had previously been passed on orally, by setting them to music and performing them.

⁸² *Women of Westland, 1860-1960*. Greymouth: Greymouth Evening Star, 1959. (second edition), 96pp. Compiled by the Greymouth branch of the National Council of Women: Editorial Committee: Mrs V Hawker (Convenor), Miss V. Corbett, Mrs R. Jones (Ex Officio).

⁸³ Recorded by Phil Garland in as ‘Farewell to the Grey’, the words collected by Mona Tracy in the 1920s refer to the ‘duffering out’ of West Coast gold and the subsequent shift to the Palmer River goldfield in Australia in the early 1890s.

This first collection was expanded and re-published in 1972,⁸⁴ with an accompanying two-record album by Kiwi Records containing 29 of the songs.

1965: Locke, Elsie, and Antony Maitland (ills). *The runaway settlers : an historical novel for children*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Republished by Penguin (1971), Hazard Press (1993) and Harper Collins (2009), this children's novel, which includes historical notes, is based on the story of a real family who leave Australia for New Zealand in 1859 to escape from an abusive husband and father. Mary Elizabeth Small and her six children change their name to Phipps and make a new life for themselves at Governor's Bay on the Akaroa Peninsula, where, undaunted by poverty and hardship, they furnish a small cottage, establish a productive market garden, acquire a boat and raise cattle which they drive across to the West Coast goldfields to sell. Although most of the action takes place in Canterbury the book is included here because of the detailed description (138-165) of the journey undertaken by Mary Phipps and her 14-year-old son Archie in 1865 when they set off walking from Governors Bay over Dyers Pass and through Riccarton, with 25 bullocks, 8 cows and a pack bullock, to follow the diggers' road to the goldfields. From Kaiapoi they spend the next five days in the tussock country of Waipara, Weka Pass and the Waikari Basin before entering the Waitohi Gorge, crossing the Hurunui Valley and tackling the treacherous, wet and tedious route along the shores of lakes Taylor, Katrine, Sumner and Brunner to the Taramakau River. Adventures on the way include rescuing a digger whose mate had drowned in the 'Terrible Cow' ("There's more bones than stones in that river"), a night of songs and stories with Australian diggers from the Otago fields and a respite for the stock at 'the Natural Paddock', a 1,200 acre stretch of pakihi by Lake Brunner. Socialist Locke makes the point that Ngai Tahu Maori knew a lot more about travelling between the two coasts than the majority of the newcomers and that Mrs Phipps and Archie were advantaged by the good relationships they had built with their Maori neighbours.

⁸⁴ Colquhoun, *New Zealand Folksongs: Song of a Young Country*.

1966: Ewen, J M. *Far from the Sun*. London: Robert Hale (Whitcombe & Tombs, New Zealand).

Jack Ewen was born in Runanga 28 February 1932 and has lived there all his life. Educated at Greymouth Tech, he left school at 14 and, after briefly working as a shop assistant, followed his father into the Runanga mine, starting as a gripper until he was old enough to go underground. Ewen was a keen reader who used the extensive library at the Runanga Working Men's Club, and this, his only novel, was written when he was in his twenties and consciously modelled on A J Cronin's *The Stars Look Down*. Ewen's own working experience underground lends credibility and accuracy to the plot which blends elements of his own life and those of his workmates with fiction. It culminates in a sensationalised mine explosion inspired by the Brunner and Dobson disasters and foreshadowing the Strongman disaster of 1967 which, Ewen admits, boosted sales. The book was unsuccessfully marketed by a British agent before being picked up by Whitcombe & Tombs in Christchurch in conjunction with Robert Hale. Set in the fictitious town of Lindis, *Far From the Sun* is the stark and often black story of a young coalminer trapped by his own moral inadequacies and lack of vision. Conscription into the army, union activities including the 16-week miners' strike in 1951, when Ewen saw the effects on the community at first hand, and the constraints of a small town are worked into the plot, in which the main character Majohn embarks on a marriage that fails, becomes increasingly dependent on alcohol, and, in the end, cheated of a hero's death in the mine explosion, chooses to go underground and die with his mates. Ewen, who wrote *Far From the Sun* because "I wanted to show I could do it",⁸⁵ was encouraged by former teacher Peter Hooper who read and commented on the manuscript and gave the book prominence in his bookshop. A keen sports fan, Ewen travelled to the Olympic Games in Tokyo and Russia but still lives in his home town of Runanga. After retiring from the mine he wrote poetry and a school and community history.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Jack Ewen, interview 19 May 2009.

⁸⁶ J M Ewen and John Flood, *Runanga, Home of Champions; school and community centenary*, Runanga: 100th Jubilee Committee of the Dunollie-Runanga District, 2005.

1966: McClenaghan, Jack. *Moving Target*. Wellington: AH & AW Reed.

This first novel by Invercargill journalist Jack McClenaghan is based on the story of Robert Monteguoy Nelson, better known as Joe Driscoll, who was posted as a deserter in 1940 when he refused conscription, and evaded capture in South Westland for five years. Driscoll spent his teenage years as a swagger in the North Island before finding his way to Whataroa in the late 1930s as an itinerant labourer turned gold prospector, and although it was his first experience of the bush he quickly learned how to survive in it. His success in evading the police and army made him a hero not only on the Coast, where he had many supporters, but throughout New Zealand, and caused embarrassment to the government. In *Moving Target* the deserter is Jim Dougherty and the geographic names are fictitious (although names like “Yealeas” can be read backwards as Sealey), as are the names of the locals who support him with supplies and shield him from discovery. Like Driscoll, Dougherty is befriended by roadmen, farmers and deer cullers who help him evade capture, sell his skins and buy supplies for him and, like Driscoll, Dougherty is befriended by a Catholic priest who is concerned for his welfare. McClenaghan introduces at least one real Coast character, Arawata Bill (O’Leary), who makes Dougherty welcome by his fire one night, and tells in detail one of Driscoll’s more cunning feats, walking backwards from a hut and then watching from a hidden vantage point as the soldiers follow his boot prints believing they are about to capture him. McClenaghan’s protagonist is a harder and more brutal man than Driscoll, however, and the novel, which has echoes of the Stanley Graham manhunt and owes some of its philosophy to Mulgan’s *Man Alone*, ends in violent death. McClenaghan pursued the ‘hard man’ theme in his second novel, *Travelling Man*, and also wrote non-fiction books on Fiordland and South Otago. When Joe Driscoll died in 1972, McClenaghan wrote his obituary for the *Christchurch Star*.

1967: Bailey, Rona, and Herbert Otto Roth. *Shanties by the Way; a Selection of New Zealand Popular Songs and Ballads*. Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs.

The authors claim this as the first published collection of “homemade” New Zealand folk songs, but Neil Colquhoun’s *New Zealand Folk Songs* was published earlier. Bailey and Roth’s collection, which includes words, music and notes about the origin of each entry, takes as its title the West Coast diggers’ song ‘The Shanty by the Way’, based on a poem

by E J Overbury published in Australia in 1865 but whose words have been significantly altered to the vernacular of the Coast. Mona Tracy wrote in 1937 that ‘Shanty’ was just as typical of old Hokitika as ‘Oh Susannah’ was of the Californian forty-niners.⁸⁷ The predominant theme of New Zealand folk song is work and workers: pieces by ‘the Inimitable Thatcher’ are prominent in this collection, which includes such classics as the sealers’ song ‘Davy Lowston’ (12, c1813), ‘The Digger’s Farewell’ (66, 1874), ‘New Chum’s Ditty’ (a favourite party piece of Coaster Richard Seddon, who sang it in 1898), and Henry Kirk’s ‘The Bloke that Puts the Acid on’ (116), among twelve songs with specific West Coast origins. Coast politics feature in the lesser-known songs ‘The Unlucky Digger’ (65), ‘Kumara Volunteers’ Song’ (72),⁸⁸ ‘The Rival Candidate’ (105), ‘Vote for Tommy Seddon, Boys’ (107); ‘The West Coasters’ Sport’ (143) and ‘The Passing of the Helvetia’ (147) praise local pubs, and the collection includes Jim Case’s 1943 ballad about Stanley Graham, ‘The Hero of the Coast’ (156).

1967: Eastwood, Oswald W. *Recollections and Reflections*.

1968: Eastwood, Oswald W. *Random Ramblings*. Christchurch: Adams.

These further volumes continue in Eastwood’s particular vein of sentiment, encompassing local topics such as the telephone service and the hospital. Mateship is celebrated in ‘I’ll never forget the Coast’ (*Random Ramblings* 32) and ‘En route’ (*Reflections and Recollections* 47). There is minor historical interest in ‘Dedication of Douglas Memorial Church at Weheka (South Westland) March 21st 1955’ (4) and more specifically in ‘Mary Meditates’ (*Random Ramblings* 47) which explains how in the early days of West Coast tourism, distinguished visitors to the Franz Joseph Hotel were invited to sign a tray cloth which was then embroidered by Mrs Alex Graham, wife of one of the guides. The signatures of royal family members, governors general, Lady Churchill, Jean Batten and others were thus handed down to Mrs Graham’s daughter because “to the genuine Coaster/ A visitor is always a friend”.

⁸⁷ Mona Tracy, *Christchurch Star-Sun*, 29 May 1937.

⁸⁸ First published in Williams, George Phipps and William Pember Reeves, *Colonial Couplets*, Christchurch: Simpson & Williams, 1889.

1968: Moore, Mary. *Where the Kowhai Blooms*. London: Mills & Boon.

“So this was New Zealand!” A recently-jilted English woman arrives in Christchurch, journeys across Arthur’s Pass by railcar and service car to a sheep station near ‘Lake Wahine’ where she joins her brother, works as a farm labourer and falls in love with the boss. Apart from a token Maori waitress who serves whitebait patties for breakfast, the obligatory wood pigeons in the kowhai tree and some good-natured Irish neighbours, there is little to distinguish this from other books in the genre, and Coasters would struggle with the geographical licence that puts three thousand acres of mostly cleared sheep farm somewhere near Stillwater. There are moments of vivid and good description, however: a truck towing a station wagon through floodwaters; spotlighting deer in the bush at night; haymaking and shearers at work, and there are New Zealand colloquialisms, although none specific to the Coast.

1969: Hooper, Peter, *Journey towards an Elegy & Other Poems*. Christchurch: The Nag's Head Press.

This second collection, printed by Bob Gormack, had a print run of 150 copies. The title poem refers to the author’s brother, killed in World War Two, and recalls their lives together growing up on the Coast; other poems in this 60-page collection continue the theme of place, emphasising how Coasters relate to the physical landscape and the seasons. ‘Burning Mine, Stockton’ (9) reflects on the mine disaster and the way it “engulfed the past”, but the next poem, ‘Of Coal and Honey’ (10) points to the enduring nature of a life where “Sweetness and ancient virtue are hard to kill”. Hooper’s ability to work over his material to good effect is evidenced in ‘The Drudge’ (18), developed from his earlier short story ‘Too Wide is the World’⁸⁹, in which a farm boy endures his first day at high school knowing that all he wants is to work on the land with his father. This collection includes ‘Notes in the Margin’ (48-58), which was inspired by a Bob Dylan album.

⁸⁹ Peter Hooper, ‘Too Wide is the World’. *New Zealand Listener*, 5 February, 1965, 144.

1969: Preston, Ivy. *April in Westland*. London: Hale/ Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs.

A love story set on the West Coast, this book was inspired by the author's brief holiday in Hokitika and features a Dunedin bank teller who is temporarily transferred to Greymouth and an affluent goldminer who works his claim with machinery and has an eye on the tourist industry. The local colour is simply window dressing, however; the characters and plot are generic. Ivy Preston was born and brought up in South Canterbury, worked as a housemaid, married a farmer and began writing short stories for women's magazines. When her husband died in his early forties she sold the farm, moved to Timaru and wrote professionally to support their four children. Her first novel *The Silver Stream* was rejected by Mills & Boon but accepted by Pegasus Press, and she subsequently wrote 40 books, including her grandmother Elizabeth Ward's biography and a history of Springfield school in South Canterbury. Preston's novels were mostly published by Robert Hale in London and a number were translated into Dutch, Spanish and German. She was a good friend of Mills & Boon writer Essie Summers, and although her books were formulaic romances she sought to provide interesting settings in various parts of New Zealand and the UK.⁹⁰

1970: Hooper, Peter. *A Pleasure of Friends*. Greymouth: Walden Books, 1970.

The ten poems in this limited edition, locally-printed book, arising from Hooper's Greymouth bookshop Walden Books which was a gathering place for writers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, not only launch his own imprint but act as a barometer of literary development on the Coast. Peter Ireland's 'Taramakau after Woollaston' (2) stands out as an abstract reading of the landscape, Brian Turner's 'Out Walking' (5) describes a West Coast beach at dusk, and Hooper's own 'The Saviours' (7) examines the meaning of an Anzac service at the Greymouth Cenotaph. The other contributors are Muriel Firth, John Caselberg, Stephen Maitland, Malcolm Walker, Jeff Holman, Alison Sanson and Harry Baynes.

⁹⁰ Ivy Preston, interview 20 November 2008.

1971: Hooper, Peter. *The Mind of Bones*. Wellington: Inter-Media Books.

This hand-set 20pp volume was printed in brown ink on quality paper, underlying the theme of craftsmanship carried through the poems. 'Lines to Baxter's Skull' (10) tells how the poet left off stacking firewood when 'Jerusalem Sonnets' arrived in the post; other poems discuss the textures and pleasures of working on the land and the satisfactions of using natural materials.

1971: Blanchfield, Paddy. *The Ballads of a Coaster*. Palmerston North: New Zealand Books.

"I am fully aware that none of them come into the category of poems," Blanchfield states in his introduction to this collection, published with the help of Professor John Dunmore while he was the Member of Parliament for Westland. A former mayor of the Greymouth Borough Council and a member of a well-known Coast family of bakers, Blanchfield understood and carried on the tradition of performance poetry and was adept at rising to an occasion. This collection of songs, ballads and party pieces includes toasts made at school reunions, where in folksong style prominent families were acknowledged in each verse, poems written for social events, such as 'Have This One With Me' which names Greymouth businessmen, political commentary often as parody of popular hits, and favourite Coast yarns retold in song or verse. Pubs, horse racing and coal miners feature prominently, and the last word usually goes to the Irish.

1972: Hooper, Peter. *Earth Marriage : Fragments*;3. Christchurch: D Young and D Waddington.

The 'Fragments' series, published by editor David Young and graphic designer David Waddington, reflects the interest in art press printing that was prevalent in the 1970s, especially in Christchurch, and this 40-page book was funded in part with a University of Canterbury Students' Association grant. Shades of cream and green have been used for some of the pages, black and white photographs by Waddington, Brian High and Greg Mackenzie background many of the pages or stand alone as illustration; the West Coast images of beach, swamp, sunset, road and track complement the poems, some abridged and

several reprinted from earlier collections. Jeffrey Holman contributed the title poem. Hooper's 'Earth Light' is a prose essay.

1972: Crump, Barry. *Fred*. Auckland: Crump Productions, 1972. (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1997).

Probably the least known of Crump's novels, this was his first solo publication after he left AH & AW Reed; biographer Colin Hogg⁹¹ records that it sold less than 500 copies, although in his autobiography⁹² Crump claims it was 5,000. Fred was the name of Crump's first good pig dog. *Fred*, however, is a West Coast character and the book is a collection of yarns about 'Coasters' loosely connected by a mythical community at the end of a road guarded by a Ministry of Works gang. Some of the stories are based on Crump's own experiences, such as the time he had to wait for gas and supplies at Bruce Bay because the storekeeper was too busy whitebaiting to man the pumps,⁹³ others are borrowed from real Coast characters such as "old Fred who looked after the Haast cattle track before the road was put through".⁹⁴ Bibliographer Rowan Gibb⁹⁵ identifies seven characters in Crump's *Bastards I Have Met*⁹⁶ that originated in *Fred*.

1974: Thompson, Mervyn. *First Return*. Christchurch: The Christchurch Theatre Trust, 1974.

Thompson was born at Kaitangata in Otago and brought up at Runanga, where he attended Greymouth District High School. He worked as a coalminer before leaving the Coast for the University of Canterbury and a successful career as an actor, director and writer. Set in London and in the mind, *First Return* uses two 'realistic' characters, Simon and Christine, and a number of metaphorical and symbolic figures played by a supporting cast of ten. The playwright uses material from his own difficult and emotionally stressful West Coast

⁹¹ Colin Hogg, *A Life in Loose Strides: The Story of Barry Crump*. Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2000.

⁹² Barry Crump, *The Life and Times of a Good Keen Man : The First of a Trilogy*. Auckland: Barry Crump Associates, 1992.

⁹³ Retold as 'State Highway 6', Barry Crump, *Crumpy's Campfire Companion : The Third of a Trilogy*. Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1996, 105.

⁹⁴ Barry Crump, 'Bush Happy,' *Crumpys' Campfire Companion*, 113-116.

⁹⁵ Gibb, 'Barry Crump, a bibliography'.

⁹⁶ Barry Crump, *Bastards I Have Met : An Abc of Bastardry*. Auckland: Crump Productions, 1971.

upbringing to explore the dilemma of the young intellectual seeking to escape the confines of his 'colonial' past.

1974: Walker, David, and Jeffrey Holman. *Two Poets : Fragments*; 5. Christchurch: Pumpkin Press.

Two Poets was published with the aid of a NZ Literary Fund grant and follows a period when Holman was a student at the University of Canterbury and David Walker an established writer and poet who strongly influenced the Christchurch poetry scene during his three years there as a lecturer in American literature.⁹⁷ Both draw inspiration not only from their experience as parents but also from their own growing up, English-born Holman as a coalminer's son in Blackball, American Walker as a farm boy in Maine, and this debut collection of Holman's work, called 'Strange Children', signals his strong identification with the Coast.

1974: Hooper, Peter. "*Profiles in Monochrome*" *Ten Poems from Westland*. Titahi Bay: Aspect Press. *Periods from a Timetable*. Clouds ; 2. Titahi Bay: Aspect Press.

The poems in *Profiles in Monochrome* are vignettes of character and relationships (some drawn from Hooper's experiences as a boarder) with a common theme; a wry awareness of ageing, its limitations and the small comforts and pleasures it brings. *Periods from a Timetable* is primarily artwork, a black linen fold sachet holding an envelope containing a single folded sheet of paper on which are printed extracts from some of the classroom poems, stripped down to their essential phrases. Hand set and produced by a craft printer at Titahi Bay, Wellington, these two limited editions in March and May 1974 mark the end of a phase in Hooper's literary career; after publishing five earlier collections and appearing as a featured poet at the 1973 Christchurch Arts Festival he established an ongoing publishing relationship with John McIndoe Ltd in Dunedin.

⁹⁷ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 'Hello America: Christchurch's 1970s Pacific Moment' in *Ka Mate Ka Ora*, Issue 9, March 2010. www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/kmko/09/ka_mate09_holman.asp

1974: Agnew, Ivan. *The Loner*. Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton.

Ivan Agnew was born on the West Coast and was a journalist with the *Grey River Argus* and the *Greymouth Evening Star* before moving to larger newspapers in Canterbury then Auckland. This biography of Robert Montaguoy Nelson, better known as Joe Driscoll, was written in conjunction with Driscoll towards the end of his life and published after his death in 1972. It backgrounds the attitudes and experiences that led him to South Westland where he headed deep into the bush to escape his army call-up in 1939. Driscoll was on the run for five years, during which he spent 61 days in the army, and his bushcraft feats became legendary. Agnew records that he was trusted by Joe Driscoll to write the biography for three reasons; he had lived in an orphanage, he was a Coaster and they had a close mate in common. The title and the narrative emphasise Driscoll's determination to live true to his own beliefs; after his release from prison in 1947 he spent most of his life as a roadman, deer culler and whitebaiter in South Westland.

1975: Temple, Philip. *The Explorer*. Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton.

Temple is better known as a writer of South Island non-fiction; however, this first novel describes the fictional 'last expedition' of surveyor and explorer Charlie Douglas, who appears as 'Jimmy Duncan' but is identifiable not only by his occupation, attitudes and mannerisms and his batwing tent but also by his devotion to his dog Betsy who is his companion in the hills (Douglas's dog was Betsey Jane). Temple writes convincingly of the physical landscape and the weka, kea, eels and mosquitoes that inhabit it, and explores the joys and fears of a man alone in the sublime, challenging and often downright dangerous world of South Westland, believing he is the first to see the mountain passes he is employed to find and record. Temple draws on Douglas's 'Soliloquy Letter' of 1902-03, published in full by John Pascoe in *Mr Explorer Douglas*⁹⁸, but his dramatic ending is pure fiction.

⁹⁸ John Pascoe (ed), *Mr Explorer Douglas*, Wellington: A H & A W Reed, 1957, 290-298.

1977: Murphy, Geoff. *Wild Man*. Endeavour Films/Acme Sausage Company.

Cinematographer Alun Bollinger uses West Coast scenery to dramatic effect in this historical slapstick comedy filmed around the Fox River commune between Charleston and Punakaiki. The 73-minute film, released with an LP by the same name, was effectively the swansong of Blerta, The Bruno Lawrence Electric Revelation and Travelling Apparition, literally a vehicle (a 1948 Leyland Tiger bus) for a travelling rock band that morphed into a musical and theatrical road show. The co-operative came out of a hippie commune in Hawke's Bay whose members travelled in the Blerta bus with their partners and children in the early 1970s, riding on the cusp of anti-Vietnam activism, Monty Python and Woodstock; after a few years a core group of Lawrence, Murphy and Bollinger became focussed on acting, directing and film-making and landed funding for a six-part television series. *Wild Man* developed from that and became the first mainstream release of a New Zealand film for 11 years, quickly followed by *Sleeping Dogs*, *The Edge* and *Solo*.⁹⁹ Well-known industry members Ian Watkins, Martyn Sanderson and Beverley Jean Morrison (Beaver) made their first feature film appearances in *Wild Man*, the first film ever shot on the Coast and produced on a low budget using sets the Blerta team built from demolition timbers and scavenged props to simulate a pioneer gold rush town. The very disjointed storyline involves two travelling Irish con-men who take turns to act as the caged and extremely dangerous 'wild man from Borneo', exhibited to gullible miners anywhere they can drum up a fee-paying audience; the action includes 'wild west' bar-room brawls, a boxing match on the beach and the tarring and feathering of a hapless miner. The cast of extras includes the partners, children and friends of the crew as well as locals, and the costuming is haphazard at best, but everyone has fun and in the context of mid-1970s creative anarchy they get away with it. The West Coast influence is in the benign wildness of the Buller landscape, the historical context of the goldfields community and above all in the tradition of feckless characters who live on their wits and make it up as they go along.

⁹⁹ Jonathan Dennis, Jan Bieringa, and Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 'Geoff Murphy,' *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1992.

1977: Hooper, Peter. *Selected Poems*, Peter Hooper. Dunedin: John McIndoe.

More strongly Coast-based than Hooper's previous collections, these poems reference his father's illness and death, using images of rain and stormy sea to evoke his sense of loss, and make connections between abandoned settlements "time tossed aside" ('Wild Damsons', p58) and the promise of a sustainable future through the enduring cycles of nature. 'Huia Villa' (24) and 'Huia Villa 2' (26) reference his mother's life in a rest home, and there are poems for Patrick White (19), T S Eliot (20), Po Chu-I (54) and Thoreau (22). The 58-page selection, effectively an anthology of his best work, marks Hooper's maturity as a poet and foreshadows his change of focus from teaching to full-time writing. 'Distance pacing with 3G' (17) is both a farewell and an evaluation; "Maybe we should burn down/ a few schools and ... /learn again from leaves..." The collection is dedicated to Muriel Firth, who contributed work to *A Pleasure of Friends*.

**1977: White, Pat. *Signposts : Poems*. Christchurch: Frontiers Press.
White, Pat. *Bushfall : Poems*. Ashburton: Pat White.**

The son of a railwayman, Pat White was born at Tapanui but grew up on the Coast where he was taught by Peter Hooper at Greymouth High School. He lived in Hokitika and wrote a booklet for the West Coast Historical Museum¹⁰⁰ before moving on to Ashburton and eventually settling in the Wairarapa. He has worked with the Writer in Schools programme, published poetry, memoir and autobiography, and is currently working on a biography of Peter Hooper. His work reflects an affinity with nature and his second collection, *Bushfall*, explores Coast images such as the sense of loss indicated by the title poem, 'Bushfall/Okarito' (12) when a chainsaw is "bleeding the silent base/of an old tree's throat ...". In the foreword, Hooper describes his former pupil as "a distinct voice among the younger New Zealand poets..."

1979: Hooper, Peter. *A Song in the Forest*. Dunedin: John McIndoe.

A Song in the Forest is Hooper's first full-length novel, written in the early 1970s and developed through a number of drafts before it was finally accepted for publication. It begins a futuristic trilogy in which the survivors of a dramatic climate change event live in

¹⁰⁰ Pat White, *West Coast Historical Museum*. Greymouth: F. Simpson, 1973.

a male-dominated, hunter-gatherer tribal society controlled by priests, a society which has no written language and worships the stag deer. The central character is Tama, an adolescent boy who is unwilling to conform to the rigid patterns laid down by the tribe, runs away from his village and is joined in his escape by his friend Rua. None of the landmarks or geographical features are named but they are easy to identify; the village is on a terrace just south of Greymouth and the two travel up the Taramakau River, ascend the Otira Gorge and follow the Bealey through beech country to the Canterbury Plains where they discover a different world inhabited by wild sheep, cattle and rabbits and where they find the remains of a drowned and ruined city. On the return journey Rua is killed in a landslide, leaving Tama to face the wrath of his elders and struggle with his knowledge of a wider world. The novel points up the harshness and physical isolation of the Coast landscape; survival depends on hunting skills and good management of the available resources, the people are physically and emotionally dependent on the natural environment and death by drowning is a major fear. Hooper focuses on language, using the natural world as a framework for the emotional and imaginative responses of the main character who has a talent for inspirational songwriting, and creating an expectation that his expanding world will require and foster equally-expanding communication skills. *A Song in the Forest* was favourably reviewed as an original and significant novel, developed as a teaching text for use by senior school classes and optioned for a film treatment that didn't eventuate.¹⁰¹

1979: Ewer, Roger (ed). *Coast Voices*. Greymouth: Walden Books.

Subtitled 'Some people writing poetry on the Coast', this collection features work by Keri Hulme, Peter Hooper, Robert Simpson, Anne Donovan, pounamu carver Bill Mathieson,¹⁰² musician and screenwriter Arthur Baysting¹⁰³ and itinerant carpenter and goldminer Abel Salisbury, who drowned 3 September 1978 attempting to save his friend Johnny at White

¹⁰¹ Peter Hooper, 'Correspondence and papers relating to *Song in the Forest*,' Literary Papers, Hocken MS-2601/088

¹⁰² In 1979 Mathieson published *I Ching Supplement*, a limited edition poetic work involving words set out on cards (Holman interview; *Coast Voices* cover). No copy has been found.

¹⁰³ Baysting was a member of the Tirimoana commune south of Fox Glacier, although he was mostly Wellington based. He wrote and starred in *The Neville Purvis Family Show*, a 30-minute comedy series first broadcast on NZ television 13 September 1979, alongside Bruno Lawrence, and also worked with Alun Bollinger, Larry Parr, Roger Donaldson and Geoff Murphy.

Horse Bay. Roger Ewer and others bought Walden Books from Peter Hooper at the end of 1973 and after a couple of years moved it to larger premises closer to the centre of town, where it became a meeting place and venue for poetry readings and music gatherings. Ewer describes *Coast Voices*, his only venture into publishing, as “a very partial collection” of the work of his friends, ideally reflecting the strength of the distinctive landscape and more realistically “the people and their survival”.¹⁰⁴ Ewer was chairman of the Greymouth Community Arts Council, which was particularly active in the late 1970s and early 1980s; several of the contributors to this collection were members of the Tirimoana commune at Fox River and, with the exception of Hooper who had returned to teaching, most were itinerant workers involved in the alternative arts, crafts and music culture of the era.¹⁰⁵ Hulme’s ‘Okarito Tuhituhia’ series of five poems (5-10) begins the collection, which includes Anne Donovan’s ‘Seaview’ (18) and ‘Death of Westland’ (19), and is illustrated with black and white photographs by Warren Moore, Paul Caffyn and Les Cleveland. *Coast Voices* was printed by the Greymouth Star in a run of 500 copies which sold sufficiently to recover Ewer’s investment in its production.¹⁰⁶

1980: Joseph, George. *The Brave One*. Petone: John Paul Productions.

Written near the end of his life as a Wellington barrister and prolific writer of short stories and detective fiction, this is Joseph’s only known children’s novel and is set in a West Coast town near the Taramakau River about 1960, although in the convention of the time some of the geographical names are fictitious. It is set at the beginning of the whitebait season with a group of children (three Pakeha and one Maori, whose parents include a teacher, a tannery worker and a publican) roaming the bush during the school holidays, when they find an injured moa on the river bank. The creature has been burnt in a bush fire further up the coast and is exhausted; the children secretly nurse it back to health by researching what to feed it, finding out about its habits and history, rubbing liniment on the burns and helping it to disgorge stones from its crop. They try to keep their find secret but other children find out, rumours spread and a newspaper reporter arrives from Christchurch to investigate. The children manage to keep their ‘Manu Toa’ (Brave One) safe until one

¹⁰⁴ Roger Ewer, *Coast Voices*.

¹⁰⁵ Roger Ewer interview 15 November 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Ewer interview.

morning they arrive and find her gone; two sets of moa prints lead back into the bush, indicating that another bird came to fetch her. The plot holds interest with topical Coast preoccupations – gold, whitebaiting, rugby – and the children are self-reliant and resourceful, at home in the bush that is their familiar playground. Although scientific evidence indicates that moa disappeared around 1450 there is a continuing tradition of moa-sightings on the Coast¹⁰⁷ and Joseph taps into this by using the moa as a metaphor for the fantastic, magical and inexplicable. When they note that whitebait have totally disappeared from the river the children speculate that their moa ate them, and when two black swans, never before seen on that river, appear at the end of the story the children accept them as a sign that their efforts have been rewarded and all is well in the natural world.

1980: Battye, Susan and Eakin, Thelma. *The Shadow of the Valley, a Play about the Brunner Mine Disaster, 1896*. Wellington: Oxford University Press.

Susan Battye and Thelma Eakin were teachers at Greymouth High School when this play was first performed there on 12 October 1977, using photographs, map and songs and incorporating a roll call of those who died in the 1896 mine disaster. The song ‘Brunner Lullaby’ was written by Battye for the play while others were adapted from folksongs. Interviews with descendants and an eyewitness formed part of the research, leading to a strong focus on what local people, including children, felt and thought at the time of the disaster and its aftermath, and the published text includes background notes by Coast historian Brian Wood. Battye pursues the theme in ‘United We Stand’, a play first performed in Coxon Hall at Greymouth High School in 1981, which won the Best New Zealand Play section of the New Zealand Theatre Federation One Act Play Festival. The script was updated in August 2007 and is available through Playmarket. ‘United We Stand’ is a docu-drama set in two time frames, 2008 and 1908: characters include Walter Rogers, Paddy Webb, Pat Hickey and the Bromilow family, and the action focuses on the socialist activities of the Blackball coal miners and the historical events around the 1908 crib-time strike, with modern scenes used to explain and comment on the consequences. Battye is an Auckland-based writer and educationalist who was born and brought up on the Coast.

¹⁰⁷ A hoax involving moa footprints on the banks of the Taramakau River in the 1950s, when Joseph’s story is set, is recounted in Vonnie Clarke Alexander’s *Westland Heritage* (Christchurch: Alexander, 1994) 128.

1981: Anderson, Russell McNee. *Tall Tales and True : Original Short Stories Set in Westland's Earlier Years*. Greymouth: K. Anderson.

These stories from the Buller region first appeared in the *Auckland Weekly News* in the 1960s and were reprinted in book form by the *Greymouth Evening Star* from the original newspaper columns. Anderson worked in the office of the Westport Coal Company in the 1930s and 1940s but most of these stories are set in the goldfields days of the late 1800s. Except for the last story describing the 1967 centennial of Charleston, they are original fiction in the traditional vein of Coast ‘yarns’ and typically feature policemen, publicans, coach drivers or coroners, and rogues who try to outwit them all with varying degrees of success. Some are based on actual places and events, such as the Maungatapu murders and the Italian settlement on the Lyell goldfields, others such as ‘The Junction Hotel’ and ‘The Itinerant Sexton’ are whimsical, feel-good stories, often brought up to date with contemporary characters looking back and re-telling old tales. Common themes are the decency and honesty of Coasters, their particular interest in justice rather than the letter of the law, and their ongoing interest in gold.

1981: Hooper, Peter. *The Goat Paddock*. Dunedin: John McIndoe.

Hooper wrote short stories and poetry from the early 1960s and this collection of ten stories, five of them specifically set on the Coast, includes several previously published in *New Zealand Listener* or *Arena*. The title story concerns a European immigrant who creates a home for two wild goats, seeing them as a symbol of the freedom of his new life. Hooper’s work with adolescents at Greymouth District High School informs ‘Boys and Girls come out to play’ (150, first published in *Listener*, no 1246, 1963) and the sensitive and moving ‘Too Wide is the World’ (144, *Listener*, 5 February, 1965). In ‘Something to Think About’ (13, *Listener*, 13 December, 1963) the expectations are reversed when a townie reluctantly goes on a hunting trip with his country mates and is pleasantly surprised by the experience, concluding “Maybe it just goes to show that you shouldn’t have any ideas about things before you actually get stuck into them,” and in ‘The Hut’ (95), set in Barrytown, the author makes the same point when an educated older widow shocks her family by choosing to leave the city and share a rough hut with a road worker. Hooper reveals his own philosophical outlook, however, in ‘The Fountains of Rome’ (34, *Arena* no

61, 1964) in which he takes the role of observer; a young man buys a picture at a Greymouth auction because he finds it beautiful, but his wife makes him sell it again because there is no room in their lives or their budget for such things. The story might well have been called ‘Consider the Lilies of the Field’; the observer takes inspiration from both the picture and the parable. Hooper published another short story which is notably absent from *The Goat Paddock*. ‘Banner with a Strange Device’ (*Listener*, 18 March, 1966) tells of a group of utopian anarchists protesting against almost everything. They are the “National Union of Protestants, using ‘Protestant’ in its original sense as meaning ‘one who protests’ the last individualists, the ultimate anarchists, whose protest is their *raison d’être*.” The author may have considered the story too dated for inclusion in the 1981 anthology, not only in its social context but in terms of his own development as a writer, but it does include a memorable line: “Did you know, sir, that the kiwi is the only bird in the world which lays an egg the shape of a rugby football?”

1981: Newall, Mike. *Bad Blood*. Southern Pictures.

This 105-minute film, directed by Englishman Mike Newall, produced by Andrew Brown and distributed by Umbrella Entertainment, stars Australians Jack Thompson as Koiterangi farmer Stanley Graham whose murderous rampage in 1941 sparked off New Zealand’s biggest manhunt, and Carol Burns as his wife Dot. It was released at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1982 and shown in Australian cinemas a year later. The supporting cast includes New Zealanders Martyn Sanderson and Bruce Allpress and much of the film was shot on location at Koiterangi, whose brooding, misty landscapes maximise the tensions of the plot, billed as “The true story of one of the most bizarre manhunts in history”¹⁰⁸. The screenplay is based on a 1974 documentary by Howard Willis who later wrote the book *Manhunt*,¹⁰⁹ which was reprinted as *Bad Blood*¹¹⁰ to coincide with the film release. The film emphasizes the alienation and ostracism experienced by the Grahams, using tracking shots through bars and glass to underline the point, and as the manhunt continues there are powerful night scenes which reverse the motif to show how vulnerable and isolated the

¹⁰⁸ Promotional poster, 1982, on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bad_Blood_\(1982_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bad_Blood_(1982_film)).

¹⁰⁹ H A Willis, *Manhunt : The Story of Stanley Graham*. Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1979.

¹¹⁰ Willis, *Bad Blood*.

Home Guard members feel. Dot Graham is played as the more crazed and paranoid of the couple, remaining “unbowed and proud in the midst of the horror they have wrought”¹¹¹, and their two children also feature as characters in the film. Willis’s factual account of the tragedy and its aftermath includes a number of black and white photographs which were used by the film’s directors to help recreate the 1940s ambience.

1982: Donovan, Anne. *Heads and leaf: poems until 1981*. Westland: Walden Books.

Donovan’s poetry links past and present in this often gritty collection, merging the issues of the 1970s and 80s – Vietnam, sexual and social equality, drugs – with the older history of the Coast, “the grandmothers who followed the wink of gold” (51), day-to-day life trapping possums and Friday nights at the pub. Donovan lived at Moana with her young son¹¹² and her voice is strongly feminist, not only in the title poem ‘Heads and leaf, I am waiting for the day’ (44), which scorns capitalism, sexism and hypocrisy, but also in expressing empathy with prostitution and physical ageing. In ‘Death of Westland’ (37) the poet considers the harsh realities of the life on the Coast in the 1980s, taking her share of responsibility for “a rotten nightmare/locked between mountains” where “the wind howls and echoes/and the women shiver.” The collection, which includes poems with city settings and several about indigenous Australians, was published by Donovan under the Walden Books imprint and includes work previously published in *Coast Voices* (Walden) and *Daddy I am so fine* (Hawk Press, 1978).

1984: Beardsley, Eric. *Blackball 08*. Auckland: William Collins.

A former journalist who spent his early childhood on the Coast, Eric Beardsley was information officer at Canterbury University in the 1970s when he and his wife became part-owners of a holiday house at Blackball. Over the next decade, the former mining town became a recreational destination for students, faculty members and friends. Discussions with the locals aroused his interest in the history of the Blackball miners’ union and resulted in this novelised account of the 1908 crib time strike. Pat Hickey, Paddy Webb and Bob Semple are the key players and, after two introductory chapters set the scene with

¹¹¹ Helen Martin, *New Zealand Film 1912-1996*, from <http://www.filmarchive.org.nz/feature-project/pages/Bad-Blood.php>

¹¹² Anne Donovan, interviewed 8 February 2012.

the death of Premier Richard Seddon and its repercussions up and down the Coast, it is Semple's voice that tells the story and ends the book with a reflection, forty years on, on what the West Coast socialist politicians really achieved in New Zealand. Other historical figures such as mine manager Eric Leitch, Blackball Miners' Union secretary Walter Rogers and his wife Elizabeth play major parts in the narrative, which includes a convincingly lively depiction of a New Year's Eve in Blackball and a less pleasant glimpse into the hard existence of the shunned and vilified Chinese miners. As much historical and political commentary as novel, *Blackball* 08 informed the 80s generation of young, politically aware activists about socialism and the formation of the New Zealand Labour party. Beardsley provides a four-page glossary, not of Maori words as was common at that time but of colloquial expressions like 'bulldust' (nonsense), 'tarts' (girls), 'maggoty' (annoyed) and 'Hughie' (God).

1983: Hooper, Peter (ed) and West Coast Writers' Group. *Winter skies*. Hokitika: Westland Community Education Service.

1984: Hooper, Peter and West Coast Writers Group. *Saturday afternoons*. Greymouth: Longacres Press.

1987: Pfahlert, Jane and Lorraine Watson. *Some Must Die*. Greymouth: Longacres Press.

1989: Westland Writers. *Something to be said for runaway buses : a collection of stories*. Ahaura: Longacres Press.

These four collections of stories and poems are all by Westland Writers, a group originating from a workshop run by Peter Hooper at Kaniere Lodge in 1983. The group continued to meet monthly, mentored by Hooper until his death in 1991, and published the last three books under his Longacres imprint (named after his small farmlet at Paroa on the outskirts of Greymouth). Early group members included Jane Pfahlert and Lorraine Watson; others such as Marlene Bennetts, Noleen Hood and Therese Rea have since published their own collections. Many but not all of the stories and poems relate to the Coast.

1983: Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*. Wellington: Spiral.

First published in New Zealand by the Spiral Collective of Christchurch, *the bone people* won the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction and the Pegasus Prize for Literature in 1984. It was re-published by Spiral/Hodder & Stoughton in 1983 and the Louisiana State

University Press, (financed by Mobil as part of the Pegasus Prize) in 1985. Also in 1985 *The Bone People* won the Booker McConnell Prize for Fiction. Hulme was brought up and educated in Christchurch and lived at Motueka and Moeraki before moving to the West Coast where she developed *The Bone People* from an earlier short story. The novel is set largely on the Coast in places like Hokitika, Whataroa and Okarito, although the geography is obscured and the place names are fictitious, and the three main characters mirror the mix of cultures that first populated the district; Kerewin and Joe have both Maori and English ancestry and Simon has French and Irish blood. Each is in his or her own way an outcast and a loner washed up on the Coast and each brings a different cultural perspective to their relationships. The novel is driven to a large extent by interactions with the physical environment, not only in the way the characters relate to it artistically and spiritually but also on a more practical subsistence level; the coastline provides food, building materials and refuge. For Kerewin, like Hulme, place is elemental; when she feels it is time to do so, she demolishes her tower and goes into the wilderness to rebuild her physical and spiritual health, and when she feels it is time to come home, she returns to the Coast.

1984: Eggleston, Kim. *From the Face to The Bin: Poems 1978-1984*. Greymouth, Strong John Press.

Eggleston was a young mother living at Runanga when she and her partner, rock musician Rex Bourke¹¹³, published this first collection, choosing the entrance to the Strongman State Mine as the cover photo and naming their imprint after their son. Some of the poems were first published in *Landfall* and the main body of work explores relationships and sexuality, occasionally referencing earlier experiences in Wellington and Dunedin but more frequently the rough Coasters' world of booze, dope and big men in singlets, where "wide-hipped women and old time cooking" ('Dinnertime Blues' p16) are seen through sharp and knowing eyes. Publicised with punk rock-style posters and distributed in New Zealand and overseas through the networks of record label Flying Nun, the book sold 1200 copies, was widely reviewed and commented on and was a finalist in the poetry section of the New Zealand Book Awards.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Bourke was guitarist and lead vocalist for The Strange Loves who recorded with the Flying Nun label.

¹¹⁴ Rex Bourke, interview 9 February 2012.

1984: Lambot, Isobel. *Rooney's Gold*. London: Hale, 1984. (Reprinted Chivers Large Print, 1991).

Rooney's Gold is a contemporary murder mystery thriller set in 'Dunnestown' in the goldmining area of Marsden, inland from Greymouth, where there was a thriving town in the 1860s and there are still old mine shafts, huts and tailings to be seen in the bush. The author is an English thriller-writer who travelled over the Southern Alps with several friends, visited the old goldfields and used the location in this, her 15th novel, acknowledging locals from Boddytown who were her guides. The rather far-fetched plot centres around an old lady still living in the family hotel which remained after the rest of the town was destroyed by fire, and her descendants who gather hoping to cash in on a large gold nugget found by her father in the 1920s and missing since he was murdered for it. Other murders follow, as do the improbable prospects of a big oil strike on the abandoned land. The central character is 'Aunt Tab', a tough, shrewd and self-sufficient woman in her eighties who, like many loners on the Coast, lives on her own terms and according to her own principles; it is no surprise that she is pulling the strings all along. The story hangs on 'local colour' provided by the author's brief visit to the area, and while the physical descriptions of the wider Greymouth area and the old goldfields are accurate and interesting, the rest of the characters, plot and actions have little to do with the Coast.

1984: Crump, Barry. *Mrs Windyflax and the Pungapeople*. Radio Pacific. (*Mrs Windyflax and the Pungapeople*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995).

Crump wrote this epic poem for children when he and his wife Robyn were staying in Golden Bay in 1984. Jim Henderson read it on Radio Pacific and the station offered to reprint it for listeners who sent \$2 and a stamped addressed envelope: the response was overwhelming and the only photocopier in Takaka, in a real estate office, was overworked as each copy was five pages long. Barry recalled in his autobiography¹¹⁵ that on one particular day he put 400 \$2 notes in the bank. The story, about an eccentric lady dressed in possum skins and sacks harassed by a tribe of tiny green thieves and mischief-makers who defeat the local constable's efforts to arrest them, is set "on a Westland river flat" in its early versions but was inspired by Barry finding a solitary child's gumboot in the sand at

¹¹⁵ Crump, *Life and Times* 216.

Punakaiki.¹¹⁶ ‘Mrs Windyflax’ was published in 1988¹¹⁷, as ‘Mrs Windyflax and the Pungapeople of Punakaiki’ in 1993¹¹⁸, and as an illustrated children’s book in 1995¹¹⁹. Sequels introduce the North Island Pungapeople¹²⁰ and South Island tramper Harry Hobnail¹²¹.

1985: Holman, Jeffrey (ed). *Out of His Treasures: A Collection of West Coast Verse*. Runanga: Fig Tree Press.

A local publication by a Runanga Christian fellowship group, this collection resulted from a poetry writing workshop conducted by Peter Hooper. The fourteen contributors include: Noleen Hood, who later published her own collection; Abel Salisbury, whose poem ‘Remember, Grandma?’ was earlier published in *Coast Voices*, musician Robbie Barrow, whose four-page poem ‘Town’ is a rhythmic pre-cursor to modern rap; and Holman, whose ‘The Retired Miner (Runanga 1984)’ is reprinted in *Blackball Beckons*.

1985: Eggleston, Kim. *25 Poems: the mist will rise and the world will drip with gold*. Greymouth: Strong John Press, 1985.

Eggleston marked her 25th birthday with this second self-published collection; the title poem (30) is about night fog in the shunting yards, ‘Come up this Valley’ (24) is equally evocative of place and ‘This Poem I’ (7) has a lilting lyricism, while others reflect the edgy, gritty, attitudes of the 1980s and the new generation of beat poets. Following the publication, which also attracted overseas interest, Eggleston was an Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury in 1989; she later compiled a bibliography of

¹¹⁶ Maggie Crump, Crump, Barry, and Colin Hogg. *Back Down the Track*. Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1998.

¹¹⁷ Barry Crump and Mandy Herron. *Barry Crump's Bedtime Yarns : A Collection of Short Stories and Poems*, Auckland: Barry Crump Associates, 1988.

¹¹⁸ Barry Crump, ‘Mrs Windyflax and the Pungapeople of Punakaiki,’ *Southern Skies*, Sept. 1993, 32-4, 38-9, illustrations by Kerry Emmerson.

¹¹⁹ Barry Crump and Murray Hone Ball, *Mrs Windyflax and the Pungapeople*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995.

¹²⁰ Barry Crump, *The Pungapeople of Ninety Mile Beach*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1999.

¹²¹ Barry Crump and Donovan Bixley, *Harry Hobnail and the Pungapeople*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2002.

Ngai Tahu history¹²² as part of a Diploma in Library and Information Studies at Victoria University.

1985: White, Pat. *Acts of resistance*. Greymouth: Longacres Press.

Published by Peter Hooper with the help of a State Literary Fund grant, this third collection by White includes poems previously published in *Landfall*, *New Zealand Listener*, *Climate*, *Comment* and the *Te Awamutu Arts Festival '81 journal of national award winners*, an anthology of winning and shortlisted poetry and short stories. The title¹²³ references not only the political issues of the 1970s – Vietnam, Soweto – but also smaller battles against time, wind and tide; there are poems reflecting on the strength of older people and the ending of lives well-lived.

1985: Hooper, Peter. *People of the long water*. Dunedin: McIndoe, 1985.

This second book in this futuristic trilogy opens with the clan brothers of the Stag People stumbling across the shepherds of the tribe that inhabits the north-eastern shoreline of a ruined Christchurch city in a clash of cultures that could well be a metaphor for 20th century Coasters and Cantabrians. The People of the Long Water are gentle, democratic shepherds and gardeners whose community is based on collective responsibility, personal freedom and artistic expression; the former Coasters attempt to impose their own rigid patriarchal and religious codes on the other tribe and inevitably disharmony and violence follow. The climax of the novel comes when, after his close friend in the Shepherd community is killed, Tama, who has become the high priest of the Stags, uses his mystical powers to visit the Country of the Newly Dead and try to make sense of what has happened. In a passage reminiscent of Butler's *Erewhon*, Hooper takes his readers into a misty otherworld in which the dead are transformed into trees where they leave their earth memories before their spirits are taken by boat across an estuary to the open sea. There are echoes of both Greek and Maori legends of the spirit world; the message the priest takes back to his people is to

¹²² Kim Eggleston, *A Select Bibliography of Ngai Tahu History Available in the South Island - Te Wai Pounamu*, unpublished, 1994.

¹²³ The quote references American poet Marie Howe, born 1951; "contemporary life would keep us too busy for consciousness - poetry is an act of resistance," and Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008); "Every beautiful poem is an act of resistance."

live in love, peace and harmony with one another, but the lesson for him is that “We shape the gods according to our dreams and like our dreams they vanish with the light.” (242). *People of the Long Water* won the 1986 NZ Book Award for Fiction.

1986: Thompson, Mervyn. *Coaltown Blues*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.

This one-man musical play about growing up in ‘Blacktown’, which includes material developed from *First Return*, is a largely autobiographical return to the playwright’s roots as well as a larger social and political commentary covering the 16 years from the election of the first Labour government in 1935 to the 1951 waterfront strike. The narrator’s childhood story, culminating in the suicide of his mother and the breaking of the miners’ strike, is played out against that political and economic backdrop. Thompson makes his points most effectively through original songs such as ‘Coaltown Blues’ and ‘Go Back Miner’. In his second autobiography *Singing the Blues*¹²⁴ he discusses his political vilification by the women’s movement, negative reactions to *Coaltown Blues* and the emotional experience of taking it back to the Coast. The play was performed at 114 different venues around New Zealand, including Reefton, in May 1985 “... in the half-derelict Blacks Point hall with a smoky fire in the fireplace and blackberries growing down the wall” (40), and three years later in Greymouth in a raging thunderstorm when it attracted its biggest audience ever. Thompson was Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury in 1990.

1986: Hooper, Peter. *Time and the Forest*. Dunedin: John McIndoe.

This final book in the trilogy focuses on Tama’s fascination with the concept of a written language, first formulated when he found an old book in the ruined city he discovered as a boy, and his growing determination to preserve the stories and teachings of his tribe by writing them down. Meanwhile he and his clan brothers have grown old; a new generation has reached maturity and formed inter-tribal relationships that disrupt the old order and force the development of a new society. Hooper’s own ethos, first expressed in a book review broadcast for NZBC Greymouth in the early 50s, is at the heart of this trilogy; “We don’t value written word enough – There is no greater miracle in life than this process

¹²⁴ Mervyn Thompson, *Singing the Blues*, Christchurch: Blacktown Press, 1991.

whereby a man's thoughts, invisible, intangible, inaudible, are transformed into peculiar black markings on white paper, and then, through the activity of another brain, made to live again."¹²⁵ He traces Tama's conceptual journey from his first encounter with a printed book to his development of a written language evolving not from the shapes and symbols of nature, a system Tama experiments with and eventually discards, but from a standardised representation of sounds, reinforcing the concept that spoken words conveying feelings and emotions are the basis of human communication: the negative reactions of the elders who control the tribe and see writing as subversive mirror the attitudes of oppressors in any cultural context.

1986: Slater Redhead, Janet. *Call of the Kotuku*. Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton.

Told by a young white heron making its first migration from Northland to Okarito, this story for older primary children gives a bird's-eye view of New Zealand as it encounters both human and natural dangers along the way, describing the habits, habitats and breeding patterns of the species in an engaging narrative. This is a different perspective on the West Coast in general and Okarito in particular, with a strong environmental message warning against forest fires and the destruction of natural habitat.

1986: Hulme, Keri. *Te Kaihau/ the Windeater*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.

A short story collection merging West Coast and Moeraki images, this book develops Hulme's fascination with shells and husks and the bodies they contain. The outer and inner layers of being, "... the different, the abnormal, the alien, the malformed ..." are a central theme, as in 'The Cicadas of Summer,' where the singers emerging from their casings are killed in a metaphor for a doomed girl. Many of the stories are generic, with the Coast incidental to the theme, but 'King Bait' (37)¹²⁶ is strongly redolent of the Coast psyche and character. 'Hooks and Feelers' (77)¹²⁷ was the basis of a film by Gaylene Preston. 'A Tally of the Souls of Sheep' (43) dislocates Kaitangata Bay from Otago to the West Coast because of the particular nature of the coastline, and 'While my Guitar Gently Sings' (107)

¹²⁵ Peter Hooper, 'Fiction and the Reading Public,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2605/042. '

¹²⁶ First published *New Zealand Listener*, 13 April 1974, 18.

¹²⁷ First published *New Zealand Listener*, 17 January 1976, 18-20.

has a girl from Whangaroa heading for the city. Hulme's work is concerned with the margins between land, sea and sky, with the deformed, maimed and crippled, and with the dislocation and powerlessness of young people; there are recurring metaphorical images of crustaceans destroyed, crushed or consumed.

1987: Bishop, Gavin. 'Te Maia and the Sea Devil'. Royal NZ Ballet Co.

Otago-based artist and children's writer Gavin Bishop was commissioned by Royal New Zealand Ballet choreographer Russell Kerr to write the story and design the set and costumes for this, his second ballet, which toured New Zealand in 1986. *Te Maia* tells the story of a Maori girl living with her father in a hut on a West Coast beach; her mother, who disappeared when she was a baby, returns as a sea horse to warn of the taipo that lives under the sea. The taipo takes *Te Maia*'s father and she subsequently sets out to find and rescue both parents.¹²⁸

1987: Orwin, Joanna. *Watcher in the Forest*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

This young adults' novel is set in an unnamed part of the Buller region where three teenage siblings on a recreational three-day tramp encounter mystical Maori figures from an earlier time and are led to find a missing piece of carved greenstone and return it to its rightful owner in a hidden burial cave. The story invokes the pounamu legend of fish turned to stone, and challenges Jen, the fourteen-year-old girl who is the central character, to trust the mysterious watcher and follow his lead in order to right an ancient wrong. The history of the forest is revealed in a series of encounters with the past; floods, earthquakes and landslides alter the landscape over the centuries but the stone endures. Orwin mixes myth, history and contemporary events to show how Maori lived and, often violently, died, and how they honoured and protected their dead, at the same time describing in detail a modern tramping expedition. The author grew up in Nelson and spent holidays at Lake Rotoiti; she references the Murchison earthquake and her descriptions fit the northwest Nelson and northern Buller region. Orwin has written three other books with similar themes.

¹²⁸ Bridget Valerie Underhill, *A Bibliography of Writing by Maori in English : With Partial Annotation : A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English in the University of Canterbury*. 1998. <http://hdl.handle.net/10092/1978>, 125.

1987: Bourke, Rex (ed). *The Whole Crack*. Greymouth: Strong John Press.

Co-publisher Rex Bourke¹²⁹ says this 124pp collection of stories and poems, many set in Dunedin, came about because of wide interest in his partner Kim Eggleston's first two poetry collections among the young writers, musicians, poets and lyricists involved in the punk rock scene which followed the hippie era of the 1970s and operated in Christchurch and Dunedin around the Flying Nun record label. Among the fourteen contributors are Dunedin music journalist Richard Langston (who put up the capital for the 300-book print run), musicians Chris Knox (Tall Dwarfs) and Hamish Kilgour (The Clean), poets Roger Wrighton and Kim Eggleston and Beatles singer John Lennon, whose poem 'So What' was included without permission because the publishers thought it fitted and wanted to pay tribute to him.¹³⁰ *The Whole Crack* also includes a series of etchings by Jude Streat, who was in jail at the time. Eggleston's five poems include 'Thud Dry and Burn' (118) and 'We Haven't Seen the Sun' (119) which describes six weeks of "justice-must-be-done-/let's-rain-on-sinners rain" on the Coast, references "two prostitutes who have come/to walk on the glaciers" and says it is "the sort of day/ Christopher Marlowe could/ get stabbed to death/ in a pub/ at 29".

1989: Brown, Michael. *The Idiot Played Rachmaninov*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Brown was brought up at Haast and this South Westland thriller is peppered with real-life incidents, characters and anecdotes recognisable to many Coasters. "Here's the point," the author notes in the preface: "no stunt or prank described in this book is beyond the provoked Westlander." The plot, in the same vein as *Smith's Dream*¹³¹ and *Broken October*¹³², pits desperate under-resourced and anti-authoritarian locals (led by a maverick helicopter pilot) against hard, exploitative and faceless government forces in a battle for control of their local assets, in this case a valuable mineral deposit. The title refers to Rosa Driscoll, a beautiful but intellectually-impaired virtuoso pianist who becomes a symbol of the Coast's vulnerable riches and a catalyst for resistance. She is one of several

¹²⁹ Bourke interview.

¹³⁰ Bourke admits to a moment of unease when six copies of *The Whole Crack* were ordered from an address in Manhattan, New York, but there were no repercussions.

¹³¹ C K Stead, *Smith's Dream*, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1971.

¹³² Craig Harrison, *Broken October, New Zealand, 1985: A Novel*, Wellington: Reed, 1976.

intellectually-impaired characters to feature in Coast literature and is a variation of the developing 'wild child' theme.

1989: Hall, Margaret. *After the Earthquake*. Dunedin: John McIndoe.

Margaret Hall is a former Christchurch librarian now living in Hokitika and this contemporary adventure story is the first of three South Westland children's novels written in her retirement. The Lyndon family are spending their school holidays in a whitebaiters' camp deep in a remote part of South Westland when an earthquake and its aftermath cause havoc with the landscape. The two adults in the party are separated, Tom stranded in a deerstalker's hut with a broken ankle while his wife Christine and four children, the eldest aged fifteen, struggle to survive in the open when their hut and most of their possessions disappear in a landslide. To make matters worse, no one knows they are still out there. South Westland's rugged landscape and tempestuous weather provide the drama, Kiwi pragmatism, survival skills and wild foods add the detail and the Search and Rescue service contributes the happy ending.

1990: Bennetts, Marlene J. *Return to the Coast*. Blackball: Emjay Publishing.

Illustrated by Cathy Fulford, edited by Rona Adshead, this self-published first poetry collection by Bennetts is based in and around Blackball and includes historical notes on the Hilton and Dominion hotels, Notown and Blackball's chimneys. Bennetts (née Anderson) is of Ngati Awa descent¹³³ and was born at Karamea, left when she was nine and returned to the Coast to retire in Blackball. Her work has since been published in the *Grey Star* from 1989-93, *The Press* 1 October 1992 and *Allsorts* October 1995 and her story 'The Whitebait Game'¹³⁴ in the *School Journal* in 1996. She became a writer later in life, developing as a poet and exploring her Maori and European heritage through Maori and bilingual children's' readers including *Te Whare Kehua*, which is based on her childhood in a West Coast sawmilling camp.

¹³³ Underhill 106.

¹³⁴ *School Journal* 2.3 (1996) 45-48, from Underhill.

1991: Adshead, Rona, and Marlene J. Bennetts. *Coastal Cornerstones: An Anthology*. Greymouth: Emjay Publishing.

Bennetts and Adshead were members of the West Coast Writers' Group mentored by Peter Hooper, who encouraged Bennetts to develop her own Emjay imprint. This anthology is divided into three sections: West Coast Images, Wellspring (people portraits), Steening (feelings and ideas). The first and richest includes 'Blackball Sentry' (11) about the old Hilton Hotel and the generations of miners and their families, tourists and new residents who have come and gone under its gaze, and 'Charleston Glory' (14) with its echoes of past ships, crinolines (a ship's captain famously hoisted a crinoline petticoat up the mast at Constant Bay to signal he had women aboard and thus jumped the queue waiting for lighters) and old diggings. The historical theme continues with 'Grey River Bargemen of Old' (16) and 'Cemeteries of early Westland' (20), but there is less confidence in contemporary landscapes: in 'Franz Josef Glacier' (18) Adshead feels the need to apologise "for pakeha ignorance" in asking "... why, Nga Roimata o Hinehukatere, / Does your resonant title mean/ 'Tears of the Avalanche'?"

1991: Hood, Noleen. *Trim Pork and Waterfalls*. Greymouth: Ledingham Books.

Hood first lived on the Coast with her husband, a Congregationalist pastor, in the 1970s.¹³⁵ She retired to Christchurch after his death then returned in 1989, explaining that "Writing was always simmering, back on the Coast it flowered". (Author note). There is a clue to this in 'Gentle man of the forest' (29), a poem for Peter Hooper which speaks of "hidden gems buried in his forest pages": Hood was a member of one of the writers' groups he mentored and encouraged, publishing first in *Out of His Treasures*, (Holman, 1985), later in Westland Writers publications edited by Hooper. Her poems are mostly about particular details of landscape but she finds cheerful irony in a child's enjoyment of "the glitter/of mica in the sun ..." ('Coaster's Child' p49).

¹³⁵ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, interview 6 October 2011.

1992: Dawber, Carol. *Backtrack*. Picton: River Press.

The first in a contemporary detective fiction series with a South Island theme, this novel is set on the Heaphy Track between Collingwood and Karamea, with some of the action in Westport. The author uses the landscape, flora and fauna and the work of conservation staff to add colour to the plot, a conventional murder mystery which involves locals and tourists in what later became the Kahurangi National Park.

1992: Hulme, Keri. *Strands*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

This collection of poems, some previously published, paints a word-picture of Okarito inside a cover painting by the author whose spare grey and red brushstrokes evoke coast and sea. The cover blurb reads, “Describe strands? O, fishing and death. Angry women/angry earth chants, and funny inserts/insights/snippets/snappings. Winesongs of fifteen years’ maturation. Plait together land and air and sea: interweave the eye and the word and the ear. ... I am a strand-dweller in reality, a strand-loper of sorts – nau mai! Come share a land, a lagoon, a mind, a glass.” Hulme’s wordplay extends to the title itself: her Okarito home is built on ‘The Strand’, a street named in the days when there was a bustling boom town around it. “The name has overtones, echoes from another place, another world”¹³⁶ she acknowledges in the photo essay *Homeplaces*, and in her introduction to this collection she is unequivocal: “Words mean/precisely what you want to hear them say/exactly/what you see in them” (6). There are complex poems in this collection, which begins with a commentary on the birds and other creatures that visit the Chatham Island Olearia tree carefully nurtured in Hulme’s Okarito garden (‘Fishing the Olearia Tree’ pp9-20) and includes ‘Pauashell Gods’ (46-51), first published in *Landfall* 37, 1983. The collection finishes with ‘Some Winesongs’ (53-64), later set to music.

1993: Hall, Margaret. *Swag & Tucker*. Dunedin: McIndoe Publishers.

Set in South Westland in 1887, this children’s thriller describes the black sand beach mining that took place around Gillespie’s Beach, and the cattle grazing that optimistic pioneers hoped

¹³⁶ Keri Hulme and Robin Morrison, *Homeplaces : Three Coasts of the South Island of New Zealand*. Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989.

would be a forerunner to farming cleared land. The dangers of river crossings and bush mustering are emphasised by the isolation of a small and close-knit community vulnerable to the bush rangers who stalked the goldfields in the 1870s and 1880s. Hall's background as a children's librarian and her deep attachment to South Westland where she now lives make this one of the most popular historical Coast novels and it was reprinted a year after its first release. Hall previously compiled a South Westland schools history¹³⁷ and in *Swag and Tucker* she writes authoritatively of the pupil-teacher system which puts her main character, 16-year-old Mary Kendrick, in charge of educating her younger siblings under the supervision of visiting school inspectors, but less convincingly of the tightly-controlled patriarchal relationships within the Irish Catholic family at the heart of the story. Some of the incidents and descriptions in the novel are recognisable from the real life story of Fred and Julia Williams, both from local pioneer families, who lived at Fox Glacier

1993: Smith, Mary A. *The Buller Folk: West Coast Poetry*. Christchurch: Mary A Smith.

Mary Smith (née Meek) was brought up on Denniston, where her mother Alison was born, and her poetry recalls the district and its people: Seddonville, Charming Creek, Mokihinui, Reefton, 'Ted the Fisherman' (drowned at sea) and, in 'Remembered' (48), a tiny clump of blue crocuses among the rocks and scrub on Denniston.

1993: Hill, Kenneth J. *Aspects of Coal and Life*. Westport: Buller Printing Ltd.

Hill was brought up in Granity and this substantial 92-page poetry collection in three parts (Coal, Faces, Home) covers aspects of Buller life from fishing and hunting to brass bands, rugby and "The very serious business of Sunday's second mass – front door closed, the back is open/ good morning brother Joe." Hill's thirteen mining poems, the largest single collection published by a Coaster, speak of experience underground on the rope and at the trucks, in the bathhouse and at the union meeting. 'Miner's Walk' (7) carries a footnote explaining in detail the "... particular, sure-footed walk. More often observed in taller men ..." developed from years of coal mining.

¹³⁷ Margaret Hall, *Black Sands and Golden Years*, Weheka-Fox Glacier School Jubilee Committee, 1979.

1993: Crump, Barry, and Dennis Turner. *Gold and Greenstone*. Auckland: Barry Crump Associates: Distributed by Becket Sterling.

This is a mellow and reflective Crump novel, a love story about an unlikely pair who meet on the road looking for work. Sally is in her thirties, a mechanic and a mother who has left her children with their grandparents while she looks for work. Quinn is twenty years older, a gold prospector and bushman from Southland who gets a wanderlust and takes her to the West Coast to dig for gold. He has Crump's extensive knowledge of the bush and the gold and, when they need money to buy a digger, he takes Sally into the national park to illegally steal greenstone from a creek he knows about. Their mate helicopters them in and takes the greenstone blocks out, but one day he doesn't turn up, and, after waiting for a while they make an epic and dangerous trip out to find the last fishing boat in George Sound. Getting out takes a week and involves swimming flooded rivers, living off the land and, when they finally hitch a ride on the crayboat, nearly broaching in a violent storm until Sally fixes the fuel intake. Finally they set up house together, she gets her children back and they acknowledge their love. Crump wrote the foreword for his sister-in-law Sigrid's story of her journey through Fiordland¹³⁸ which covers some of the same geographical territory. *Gold and Greenstone* was slated for its slipshod writing¹³⁹ and for "an Enid Blyton-in-a-Swannodri aspect to it"¹⁴⁰; nevertheless it is where Crump's heartfelt love of the Coast is most evident. Like Quinn, he spent his happiest times whitebaiting, hunting and goldmining on the Coast, living in rough huts or under canvas, cooking over a fire and living off what he could catch, trap or shoot when funds ran low; his third wife Robyn was a Coaster and this romance echoes their own 1980s goldmining interlude in Westland and South Otago. A sound recording of *Gold and Greenstone* (read by Phil Harris) was made in 1993 by the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind.

1994: Crump, Barry, and Pat Trembeth. *Artie and the Fox*. Auckland: Moa Beckett.

Although *Artie and the Fox*, like Crump's other novels, is set in an imaginary country district, the escapades of the main characters Artie and Joe, who at one stage close the road over a mountain pass to divert customers to the pub they are working in, are indicative of

¹³⁸Sigrid Crump, *Bushwoman : A Search for the Perfect Place*, Auckland: Reed, 1995.

¹³⁹Sharp, Iain. 'Good keen man loses his edge', *Sunday Star*, 23 May 1993, quoted in Gibbs, 79.

¹⁴⁰Graeme Lay. *North and South* Sept. 1993:147-8, quoted in Gibbs 79.

the Coast where he had been living. The main plot involves fitting a gold detector under a truck and digging up lucrative gold-bearing gravel while carrying out a council road-marking contract, and their escapades inevitably end in triumph over their arch-enemy, an over-zealous traffic officer who is finally induced to alcoholic over-indulgence and an ignominious retreat. Between 1982 and 1995 Crump reached a new audience through a series of television ads for Toyota, co-starring Lloyd Scott in the early 1990s, and in June 1992 their song 'Side by Side', released to support the 1992 America's Cup, peaked at number two on the New Zealand top ten charts.

1994: Flannery, Kate. *Like You, Really*. Auckland: Penguin.

This selection of stories linking three generations of women in a South Island family begins with 'Parkhaven Hotel', winner of the American Express Short Story Award in 1988, and includes 'A Girl's Best Friend', the BNZ/Katherine Mansfield short story winner in 1991, as well as other previously-published stories. Rather than presenting the characters in chronological sequence, the author offers a series of linking snapshots, sometimes invoking a family gathering where such stories might be told and repeated as part of the group's collective memory, at other times revealing very personal thoughts and experiences which are at the same time universal to New Zealanders growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. The Coast is part of that experience, from the day a nervous bride-to-be is driven over the hill to meet and be inspected by her lively Irish-Catholic in-laws to the stories her grown-up daughters are told by elderly dementia patients in institutional care. Although most of the stories are set in Canterbury, the Coast features geographically in 'Looking for Jennifer's camera', about a family holiday soon after the unsolved Jennifer Beard murder at Haast, and in 'Paradise Ducks 1956,' which records a city girl's dismay at the unlovely Greymouth environment. 'Old Faithful', 'A Girl's Best Friend' and 'Eriskay Love Lilt' are vignettes of a West Coast childhood, while 'Scarlet Rose' and 'I am the one with my hands on the ball' evoke more universal memories of New Zealand in the 1950s. 'A Girl's Best Friend', an intense evocation of childhood presented through snapshots of personal memory each with its own sub-heading, was selected by Lawrence Jones and Heather Murray for

inclusion in their anthology of post-1980s South Island writing.¹⁴¹ Flannery was Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury in 1994 when this book was published.

1994: Smith, Shirley. *The Coast People*. Christchurch: Shirley Smith.

These poems by a former Grey County Council member commemorate local identities and events, many in the Reefton district.

1995: Davison, Yvonne, and P L Kennedy. *Coastlines: A Collection of Stories and Poems*. Greymouth: Coastline Books.

Yvonne Davison, a former Greymouth High School teacher, was a member of the Westland Writers group formed and mentored by Peter Hooper. This collection contains work by original group members, most of which has been published elsewhere. Holman's 'The retired miner'(15) and Marlene Bennetts' 'All in a Day's Work' (12) acknowledge the routines and risks of coal mining, Noleen Hood, Neil Simmons and Daphne Simpson contribute landscape poems, and there is a dedication (51) to greenstone carver Bill Mathieson. Davison earlier co-wrote *The Longest Beat*¹⁴², a history of policing on the Coast, and later co-edited *Women of Westland*.¹⁴³

1995: McCormick, Edward, and Joyce Mackenzie (ed). *Ballads of the West by Edward McCormick*. Wanganui: A W (Pop) Harper.

Found in the Westland District Library in Hokitika, this privately-published poetry collection contains the thoughts and reminiscences of an old South Westland settler, but is disappointingly lacking in historical description.

¹⁴¹ Lawrence Jones and Heather Murray (eds), *From the Mainland, an anthology of South Island Writing*, Auckland: Godwit, 1995.

¹⁴² Kit Carson, Yvonne Davison, and New Zealand Police, *The Longest Beat*, Greymouth: P M Deazley and the New Zealand Police, 1990.

¹⁴³ Yvonne Davison, Frankie Mills and National Council of Women of New Zealand, Westland Branch, *Women of Westland and Their Families*, Omnibus ed, Greymouth: The Branch, 1998.

1996: Alexander, Vonnie. *Echoes of my Sisters*. Christchurch: Quoin Press.

This inter-generational family saga starts with the arrival of Maura O'Sullivan and her husband and young sons at Jackson Bay in 1875 as part of the government's planned settlement, the remote and inhospitable region described with a historical accuracy that includes the fictionalised character of settlement superintendent Duncan Macfarlane. The ill-conceived Jackson Bay homesteading settlement was doomed to failure because the land was completely unsuitable for cultivation, a proposed jetty was never built and the road building scheme which was to provide the families with wages was eventually abandoned. Alexander portrays the plight of Scots, Irish, Italian, German, Danish and Maori families struggling to survive, making the most of the cultural and religious differences between them and including the historical donnybrook among the women at Jackson Bay School who fought with knives, fists and stockings filled with stones until their men folk intervened. The story follows the lives and relationships of women in the O'Sullivan family over five generations, moving between Haast, Greymouth, Wellington, Christchurch and Australia. Irish Catholicism is a major theme, as is women's strength and self-determination, and the novel ends with the approach of the 1996 general election, the first under the MMP system. Alexander was brought up at Whataroa in South Westland and her earlier publication *Westland Heritage*¹⁴⁴ not only provides the background history of the Sullivan and Williams families of Fox Glacier, on whom the O'Sullivans and Wilsons of the novel are closely modelled, but also describes her own experiences at St Mary's convent school, which features in *Echoes of My Sisters*.

1997: Beaglehole, Helen. *The Family Album*. Whatamango Bay: Cape Catley.

Young adult fiction aimed at secondary school level, this family story focuses on inter-generational relationships as 18-year-old Anna is sent to the family farm at Waiotahu in Westland to help her grandmother and uncle move into a smaller modern home. The old house is full of the past and Anna uncovers the family secret: Hannah, a girl her own age who became pregnant out of wedlock, was sent to live in isolation in a house in the bush and died there. As Anna struggles to understand her grandmother's reactions to leaving the

¹⁴⁴ Vonnie Alexander, *Westland Heritage (South Island, New Zealand) : A Journey of Nostalgia*, Christchurch: Alexander Publications, 1994.

old homestead she finds strange parallels between Hannah's life and her own: both girls are taken on picnics to the same spot, both fall in love on the picnic, both have difficult and dysfunctional families ruled by appearances rather than feelings. The role of the Coast is to provide physical isolation (Anna is far removed from her urban Auckland environment), danger (one lover is drowned in a flood, the other is cut off by weather), chronological distance (the family has continuity of place through generations) and, although there is little description of landscape, a romantic setting; "The day of the picnic was one of those West Coast days when the green of the river turns emerald and the shingle at the bottom shines like gold." (46) Beaglehole has written children's books at primary and secondary level, contributed to *Te Ara* and the *New Zealand Dictionary of National Biography*, and in 2006 published an authoritative history of New Zealand lighthouses.¹⁴⁵ This is her only West Coast novel.

1997: De Goldi, Kate. *Love, Charlie Mike*. Auckland: Penguin.

This novel for young adults is a diary-based story told in the first person by Christchurch high school student Christy Callaghan whose Maori soldier boyfriend Sonny, a distant relative from Greymouth, is posted to Bosnia with the UN peace-keeping force. Christy lives with her parents, younger brother and paternal grandmother who has dementia and needs constant supervision. A mystery about her father's parentage drives her across to the Coast, in company with her grandmother, to find the truth: her grandmother regularly escaped to the Coast to meet a lover, Sonny's grandfather, in Greymouth and the two families are related by blood more closely than anyone realised. She finds Sonny, too, sent home in disgrace after having befriended the enemy and deserted the army, and she develops maturity and compassion as she deals with these events. The Coast is 'The Other Side' where there is warmth, consolation and acceptance, and the trip from Christchurch to Greymouth on the TranzAlpine train is interspersed with back story to form the framework of the novel. The Otira tunnel triggers her grandmother's memories; "over the mountain, under the mountain, into the mountain I like that tunnel. The long dark and then *out* to the other world." (112). There's a strong suggestion of different rules and different values

¹⁴⁵ Helen Beaglehole, *Lighting the Coast, A history of New Zealand's coastal lighthouse system*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2006.

on the Coast, not only in the loving tolerance of Sonny's family but in the grandmother's unconventional solution to her husband's sexual inadequacy, and Christy is encouraged by these examples to follow her own conscience.

1997: Erasmuson, Martin, G. A. Lauder, and Hokitika Live Poets Society. *Wild Food for the Soul: A Collection of New West Coast Writing*. 1st ed. Hokitika: The Society.

The Hokitika Live Poets Society was formed over a cup of tea at Trappers cafe in 1995 and quickly established a tradition of monthly readings by local poets; this 112-page collection features 16 poets including Martin Erasmuson and Glen Lauder, who founded the Society. Their occupations range from schoolteacher, aid worker and artist to freezing worker, midwife and househusband, several retirees and an eleven-year-old schoolgirl; their poems are about Aoraki and Shortland Street, whitebaiting and funerals; their language is straightforward and often earthy and there is humour, sentiment and pathos in their stories. The underlying theme is a quiet satisfaction with their lot.

1998: Kelly, Kaye. *Mecca's Gold*. Christchurch: Quoin Press.

Kelly is a Coaster by birth and upbringing and this privately-published first novel marks the beginning of the new genre of West Coast historical fiction which proliferated in the following decade. Some events and characters are drawn from real life and the author cites Faris (*Charleston*, 1941) as a resource. This is the work of a writer still learning her craft but it brings the boom town of Charleston to life in an engaging and historically credible way through the eyes of a new arrival from England whose expectations are dramatically changed by circumstances. The dangers of landing in Constant Bay, the poverty, mud and squalor of the new settlement and the stresses of physical and cultural isolation are explored in this historical romance, in which, typically of Coast fiction, the main protagonists are a doctor and an independent and feisty young woman with business acumen.

1998: Dawson, John, and David Henshaw. *Whitebait and Wetlands: Tales of the West Coast*. Auckland: David Bateman.

Dawson and Henshaw both spent significant parts of their working lives on the Coast as farm advisory officer and valuer respectively; this illustrated collection of fifteen tales “heard on the Coast” follows the tradition of ‘wild west’ folklore, brings old favourite yarns up to date and adds a few new ones. High-styled visitors, police and traffic cops, environmental activists and fisheries inspectors are favourite targets, with wily West Coast poachers, horse traders and publicans gaining the upper hand as usual. There is more than a trace of the wry deprecating humour common to Coasters, as the opening of the Wanganui River bridge in 1963 (9-11) when locals decided to scare the mayor’s wife by throwing bricks on the roof of the longdrop she was using; she opened the door at the wrong moment and was felled by a brick ‘fair between the eyes’, forcing the perpetrators to take to the bush for several days until the fuss died down; Vic Nolan, caught wearing his daughter’s dress because she was the only one who could catch a difficult horse and she was away; Jimmy the shy road worker whose mates conned him into dressing up for a non-existent dance party; the contracting boss whose ute was booby-trapped so his courting was interrupted by a car horn. ‘Roadmakers’ (33-35) pays tribute to the men at Lake Moeraki who lengthened an airstrip in an hour and a half so an injured construction worker could be flown out, and ‘Coaster Pat’ (64), in which the owner of a slow race-horse outwits a buyer, acknowledges Leslie Hobbs as originator of the story.

1998: Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. *Flood Damage: Poems*. Christchurch: Ngā Kupu Press.

Some of the poems in this 35-page collection have appeared in *Poetry Wales*, *I-Ching Supplement*, *Takahe* 34, *Zephyr* 5; ‘Inferno (Strongman Mine 1978)’ (19) was published in *The Press* after the Pike River mine disaster in 2010. Holman references the Coast’s pounamu in ‘Nowhere in the year of the Horse (for the Carver)’ (4) and ‘Story creatures (for Bill Mathieson)’ (18), but ‘T-bar clothesline, Okarito’ (24) refers to the grimmer realities of “... bush socks/soaked last night/in beer sweat.”

1998: Grant, Andrew. *Hawks*. Christchurch: Shoal Bay Press.

This thriller based on the venison wars of the early 1970s in South Westland and Fiordland features a former SAS soldier whose deadly shooting skills were honed in the Vietnam war. He is the new generation's 'man alone', relishing the physical challenge of working alongside equally tough and like-minded men in the crazy, driven world of hunting deer by helicopter: his survival story—he is stranded in Fiordland and presumed dead after a helicopter crash—is graphic and gripping. Some of the action in *Hawks* takes place in Te Anau and Dunedin, but the shooters are based at 'Omati', a fictional town between Ross and Franz Josef, and on a refrigerated trawler moored in the fiords. Andrew Grant is a *nom de plume* for Grant Shanks, who grew up on farms in Otago and Southland: this was his first novel and was followed by *Tyler's Gold* which features a treasure-hunting salvage crew in the Southern Ocean: both are hard-edged thrillers with plenty of sex, danger and violence and an eye to the international genre market. Grant's later novels are set in Texas, Thailand and Singapore. An internationally-recognised copywriter and producer, Shanks also writes non-fiction under his own name and science fiction as G Andrews.¹⁴⁶

1998: Hawes, Peter. *Playing Waterloo*. Auckland: Vintage.

In a symbolic computer-generated war game encompassing several time zones, a large amount of cyberspace, big financial stakes and plenty of sex, French and English protagonists replay the Battle of Waterloo to achieve a very different outcome. The final battle is fought between Napoleon Bonaparte and Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha, who happens to be at Kawatiri Pa on the West Coast of the South Island when the British arrive with the French in hot pursuit. In this exuberant and sardonic romp through history Hawes is faithful to the Coast, providing the Bonaparte army with huge driftwood logs to float their cannon ashore but serving them a feast of mutton birds they are unable to stomach. King George of England becomes king of the West Coast of New Zealand, the French protagonist who claims descent from Napoleon gets a bill for 16 million from Mr Tuhuru for "a land deal that went sour, sometime last century" and Tuhuru promptly gifts the money to the British Royal family, echoing the original land deal on the Coast when James

¹⁴⁶ De Hek, Danny. 'Grant Shanks'. <http://www.newzealandnz.co.nz/about-us/grant-shanks.html>, viewed 23 June, 2010

Mackay bought Westland from Tuhuru and other chiefs for 300 sovereigns. Professor Sheridan, the British protagonist, “won his second Pulitzer for his controversial work *The Two Napoleons*, which suggested an obscure Maori chief called Te Rauparaha had more military nous than Napoleon.” *Playing Waterloo* draws on Julius Vogel’s *Anno Domini 2000*, when Napoleon’s hot air balloon is used to bomb Te Rauparaha’s pa with red hot stones, and ends when the Maori general hijacks the British ship and heads for the safety of Kapiti.

1998: Uncle Anzac. *Kapai and the Highway Robbers*. Auckland: Random House.

The Uncle Anzac series, a franchise of junior picture books written by Jon Gadsby and others, uses narrative verse and brightly-coloured illustrations to follow the adventures of Kapai the kiwi and his human friends. Each story has a social message; the characters are bicultural and enjoy aspects of New Zealand adventure tourism such as white water rafting, caving and bungy jumping. In this one, Kapai and his friends head for Franz Josef glacier “on the Wild West coast ... where it’s nearly always raining”, but are forced to confront a pair of entrepreneurial kea trying to sell them souvenirs including the rotor from the sightseeing helicopter and the hubcaps from the tour bus. The kea are remorseful, the glacier is stunningly beautiful and the moral of the story is that crime does not pay.

1999: Alexander, Vanessa. *Magik and Rose*. Kahukura Productions.

This 1999 contemporary drama film, written and directed by Vanessa Alexander, was filmed entirely on location in and around Hokitika and includes footage of the Wild Foods Festival, attended by 15,000 people, and the barn dance afterwards. The plot involves friendship and fertility, a fortune-teller who lives in a house truck, a snail-farming mathematician and a dairy-farmer’s wife in what producer Larry Parr describes as “a blending of a buddy-style movie with ... strong, emotional subject matter intersecting with very human, very real comedic moments.”¹⁴⁷ Parr also said that making the film in Hokitika was “... the most enjoyable producing experience I’ve had,” echoing Alexander’s

¹⁴⁷ Larry Parr, ‘Magik + Rose, The Producer,’ <http://www.magikandrose.co.nz/movie.html>, viewed 15 November 2010.

comment that “I truly believe the incredible heart and soul of the West Coast people were an essential part of making *Magik and Rose*.” What comes across on the screen is the complete credibility of the five central characters, their quirky lifestyles and unlikely inter-relationships because of the context of the Coast, where traditional values of individuality and tolerance have morphed into a willing acceptance of alternative lifestyles, not least because of their economic importance to the community at large.

1999: Hager, Mandy. *Run for the Trees*. Wellington: Steele Roberts.

This young adult novel set in Wellington, Marlborough and the West Coast was reprinted in 2003 and 2008. The main protagonist, 13-year-old Ben Costas, is dyslexic, as is his environmental activist Uncle Rick, and the difficulties caused by their condition form part of the storyline which centres on unscrupulous politicians and businessmen threatening the West Coast rimu forests. As Ben makes his way to the Coast to help his uncle he is pursued by men intent on stopping the protest but joined by a runaway teenage girl who helps him in his quest. They arrive at ‘Williamstown’ near Westport, a town whose loyalties are divided between logging company supporters and protesters, and head into the forest where they encounter rimu and rata, ferns and black robins, hide in caves and in an underground miners’ tunnel. Ben meets two old Coasters in their 80s who help him make contact with his uncle and smuggle the vital evidence back to Wellington in time to stop the logging scheme. The wildness of the Coast landscape has a major impact on the two urban teenagers. “Great grey rollers crashed onto bleak beaches. ... Uncle Rick had told him that the Coast was spectacular but he was unprepared for the power of the place - a raw energy which set his heart surging with unexplainable joy.”(73-74)

2000: Kyle, Leicester. *A Safe House for a Man*. Auckland: Polygraphia.

Christchurch-born poet Reverend Leicester Kyle (1937-2006) trained as a botanist before being ordained as an Anglican priest at the age of 26 and working in parishes around New Zealand (notably Banks Peninsula) and in India. He wrote for much of his life but it was not until after his retirement from the ministry and the death of his wife that he began

reading and publishing his poetry.¹⁴⁸ In 1999 he moved from Auckland to Millerton where he published *Machinery for Pain*,¹⁴⁹ a collection describing ways to deal with physical and emotional pain. *A Safe House for a Man*, his second West Coast publication, references a Millerton house “kept available for any local man who falls into a state of domestic disorder”(1). The themes of the long semi-narrative title poem are separation, self-analysis and acknowledgment of loss.¹⁵⁰ The two other long poems in the book are linked in theme: ‘The Araneidea’ discusses turning live spiders into preserved specimens; ‘Threnos’ is an elegy for the poet’s wife Miriel who died of cancer in 1997.¹⁵¹

2000: Donovan, Anne. *Belladonna Time*. Kotuku: Molloy Creek Press.

This self-published third collection of poems by Donovan covers time spent in Melbourne and her return to the Coast; ‘At the Lake’ (12), ‘A Moment Span’ (15) and ‘Bell Hill Road’ (23) are finely-observed scenes; ‘Moana Winter’ (55) and ‘Kopara’ capture human interaction with the landscape and in ‘Rua Johnson Speaks to Majesty’ the poet identifies as Maori.

2000: Blackball History Group. *Blackball Beckons*. Greymouth: Blackball History Group Inc.

MP Damien O’Connor and Greymouth Mayor Kevin Brown launched this selection of 82 poems at The Blackball Workingmen’s Club and Mutual Society of the Arts. The 118-page collection is sub-divided as ‘Our Places’, ‘Our History’, ‘Our People’ and ‘Our Natural Places’; the poetry traverses 130 years of Coast history from ‘The Unlucky Digger’ (30) first published in *The Lantern* (Hokitika), 6 August 1870, to ‘Sandy McGrew’ from R Neil Simmons’ *Sandy McGrew and Other Verses by a Would Be West Coaster* (2000)¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ Scott Hamilton, ‘More Than Pain: Leicester Kyle (1937-2006)’ Obituary, July 5, 2006, on <<http://readingthemaps.blogspot.co.nz/2006/07/more-than-pain-leicester-kyle-1937.html>> 7 March 2012.

¹⁴⁹ Leicester Kyle, *A Machinery for Pain*, Millerton: Heteropholis Press, 1999.

¹⁵⁰ Notes to the text by Dr Jack Ross, viewed 7 March 2012 on <http://leicesterkyle.blogspot.co.nz/search/label/Polygraphia%20Press>

¹⁵¹ Kyle’s published and unpublished work is available online at <http://leicesterkyle1.blogspot.co.nz>, a comprehensive site created and edited by Massey University creative writing teacher and poet Jack Ross, who is one of Kyle’s two literary executors; the other is Otago poet David Howard.

¹⁵² I have been unable to locate a copy of this publication

Cornelius O'Regan, Hugh Smith, Marlene Bennetts and Jeffrey Paparoa Holman are among the better-known Coast writers whose work is included. There are a number of poems by F T Christie, whose descendants are still at Blackball and whose work records the past; in 'The Old Mill' (58) he describes the closing-down of Hahn's sawmill, which had operated for 30 years, 'The Rose and Thistle' (25) records the night the Blackwater hotel burnt down and 'Dew Drop Inn – 1965' (23) is about the Moonlight Centennial Celebrations in 1965. Ian Davidson's poem 'About Old Earl Owens' (56-57) remembers the last of the independent underground miners and S Robertson's 'Grey River Bar' (67) honours the commercial fishermen of Greymouth.

2000: Hawes, Peter. *The Dream of Nikau Jam*. Auckland, Random House.

Making jam from nikau seeds was illegal by 1997, when this novel is set but, like after-hours drinking and generally looking out for each other, it is deemed an honourable tradition at the northern end of the Coast, especially when it is a skill handed down from a mother to her gigantic and slow-thinking son Simon (Feeffi) Fyfe, and when self-righteous conservationists from 'Over the Hill' move onto the Denniston plateau and start spying, the Buller people naturally close ranks. Hawes weaves local and historical lore into the tale, reminiscent of earlier Coast yarns when the town drunk is a lawyer and the circuit judge finds himself manipulating proceedings to ensure the appropriate outcome. When tension is at its height the Buller folk take to wearing their rugby jerseys, underlining the age-old orange and green Protestant/Catholic split, but their tolerance for one another encompasses Eland, a shop-lifting waif from a psychiatric institution who reinvents herself as Feeffi's girlfriend and apprentice jam-maker. This is a West Coast novel by a Coaster who not only knows and loves the Buller but also understands its storytelling traditions and how to fit them into a modern context.

2001: Price, Felicity. *Dancing in the Wilderness*. Christchurch: Hazard Press.

Felicity Price is not a Coaster but as a Christchurch-based journalist she developed a fascination for and affinity with the mining communities at Denniston and Burnett's Face, and much of the material in this novel has come from historical research and interviews

with locals. The two sets of characters in the narrative focus on two distinct periods of Buller history, the birth of the Labour movement in the early 1900s and the beginnings of environmental activism ninety years later, and are linked, as many West Coast events are, by family connections. In the earlier story, British coalminer Ted Jackson and his wife Etta come to Burnett's Face at the beginning of their married life in 1908. He comes from a mining family and brings with him a strong union ethic and a love of brass band music; she is a clergyman's daughter, the outsider through whose eyes we see the day to day life of women on the hill, and their story includes all the tensions and dangers of the mining environment both below ground and above. In the second interwoven story, Etta and Ted's granddaughters confront each other from opposite sides of an environmental dispute as protestors try to stop a logging company taking giant rimu trees from the forest. Public relations and the media are powerful tools for both sides, reflecting the author's professional PR background, and she is convincing about Westport attitudes and values. Both stories are told by the women involved and although the characters are fictitious the novel references the contemporary interest in family history. This is Price's first novel and the only one set entirely on the Coast; she has since written in a similar vein blending past and present, notably in *No Angel*¹⁵³, in which a Hokitika bar girl falls in love with West Coast bushranger Richard Burgess and follows him to Nelson, where he is arrested and hung for his role in the Maungatapu murders, and in *Call of the Falcon*,¹⁵⁴ which is set in Arrowtown and utilises the Bully Hayes story. Price also wrote *Dare to Dream: The John Britten Story*¹⁵⁵.

2001: Williams, Ralph. *Cry a Distant Shamrock*. Christchurch: Quoin Press.

A prequel to the author's Otago-based books *A Piece of Cake* and *A Flash in the Pan*, this novel set in 1942 tells the story of young Harry Evans whose engineer father works on the Ngahere gold dredge near Blackball and who lives with his parents in a tent hut on the site, an unwilling and bewildered witness to the break-up of their marriage. There has been little written about the Coast in the 1940s and this novel draws on the author's boyhood memories, with interesting detail of the dredge construction and operation and the life of

¹⁵³ Felicity Price, *No Angel*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 2002.

¹⁵⁴ Felicity Price, *Call of the Falcon*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Felicity Price, *Dare to Dream: The John Britten Story*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 2003.

the small community of workers. The plot, involving the complex theft of gold by an Irish engineer raising funds for the IRA, is closely based on a real event: in 1941 former Ngahere dredge engineer Leo Edward (Ted) Morland was arrested trying to cross the Canadian border with gold ingots concealed in the door panels of his car after he had successfully smuggled them out of New Zealand. He was extradited back to face trial and died in Addington prison from mercury poisoning contracted during the illicit smelting process carried out near Blackball.

2001: Keenan, Jim. *The Coast's Colourful Characters*. Hokitika: Jim Keenan.

Jim Keenan was born and raised in the Hokitika pub established by his grandfather in 1870, served with distinction in Italy in the Second World War and returned to the Coast to drive a taxi and eventually own the fleet. He was secretary-treasurer of the Westland Electric Power Board, served ten years as deputy mayor, was president of the Hokitika RSA and became a respected local historian. His West Coast yarns follow in the tradition of Hobbs, Blanchfield, Dawson and Henshaw in that they are tall tales revolving around horse-racing, salesmanship and after-hours drinking, but they owe more to earlier historians such as Waratah¹⁵⁶ because of their celebration of real-life characters. Keenan blurs the line between fact and fiction by the frequent use of nicknames, a long-standing West Coast tradition, but is understandably proud of his grandfather Gaylor, who built the Royal Mail Hotel at Woodstock, his parents Mick and Carol Keenan, and his brother, who was the third-generation owner. Notable in the midst of his more generic stories is the factual account of the first solo trans-Tasman flight in January 1931, when a 21-year-old Australian named Guy Menzies took off from Sydney airport in a single-engined Avro Avian, after deliberately filing a misleading flight plan for Perth, and landed 11 hours and 45 minutes later upside down in a Hokitika swamp. (54-7)¹⁵⁷ The 20-verse poem 'Pro and Bottle Queen' (25) about the milkman's horse that was tipped to win in the Hokitika races, allegedly written about a real event in the 1930s and previously published by Paddy Blanchfield among others, is reprinted here in full, as are the accounts of Dalmatian goldminer's son Arty Beban, who introduced professional wrestling to the Coast, and

¹⁵⁶ Waratah. *Tales of the Golden West*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1906.

¹⁵⁷ The flight log is reproduced in the book and the author was instrumental in having a commemorative sign erected 45 years later.

Westland Racing Club patron Father Bill Middleton who reputedly named his own racehorse 'Peace' so he could call on his parishioners to pray for it every Sunday. The book is illustrated with black and white historical photographs.

2001: Hokitika Live Poets Society. *Wild Food from Old Souls : A Collection of West Coast Writing from the Past*. Hokitika: Hokitika Live Poets Society.

This second collection from the Hokitika Live Poets Society celebrates and acknowledges the work of 15 previous Coast poets including Charles Thatcher, Cornelius O'Regan, Hugh Smith, Paddy Blanchfield, Mary Smith and Peter Hooper, with selections from each of their previously published collections. Dinny Nolan's 'Arawata Bill' (43) and Fergus Barrowman's 'In Memory of James Galligan'¹⁵⁸ (62-63) are lesser-known poems, and there are two inclusions by anonymous poets.

20001: Hokitika Live Poets Society. *Untitled and Other Poems : A Collection of Poems by West Coasters for All West Coasters at Heart*. Hokitika: Hokitika Live Poets Society.

A companion volume to *Wild Food From Old Souls*, this collection includes work by Martin Erasmussen, David Ogle, Rob Grigg, Kevin Rock, Ben Gaia, Don Neale and Pamela Fairmaid, all of whom contributed work to the Society's first collection in 1997, as well as newcomers Katherine Lane, Pauline Roberts, Doreen Johnson, Philip Daniel and Donald Buglass. Don Neale sums up the spirit of the Society with this: "He stood up in front of the room/ wisdom just rattled off his tongue./ 'My poems aren't really poems,' he said,/ 'They're just songs that haven't been sung.'" (72)

2001: Kyle, Leicester. *The Great Buller Coal Plateaux*. Westport: Leicester Kyle for Millerton and Plateaux Protection Society.

The Buller Coal Plateaux, inland from Granity and Waimangaroa and largely hidden from view by a coastal mountain range, have been mined for coal since the 1860s but have recently been subject to open-cast mining development, the subject of many of the 21 poems in this self-published book which is also available on line at

¹⁵⁸ A Kumara resident who worked as a surveyor on the Otira tunnel project and died in 1908.

lesterkyle1@blogspot.co.nz. Kyle's view is informed and often philosophical; he discusses the mining of the top of Mt Frederick in terms of hubris as well as exploitation of the resource, uses the analogy of a BMW to explain that power has its own temptations, writes about the demise of Stockton village in 1999 when the houses were purchased by Solid Energy for removal, and segues easily into a detailed catalogue of star lily, *celmisia*, white *Epacris* and sun orchids. He occasionally evokes imaginary worlds, as when he describes the site of the derelict Mt Williams mine as "like a camp of colonial man/ abandoned/ Or a gulch where desperadoes live/ asleep," and concludes that, although no one has worked there for 36 years, "If you listen you can hear/ mechanical plans and some intentions/ they're coming back." (5) The book includes location description and explanatory notes.

2002: Kyle, Leicester, and Daisy. *Things to Do with Kerosene*. Buller: Heteropolis Press.

These poems are created from the Handy Hints at the back of *Aunt Daisy's Cookery Book*. Kyle says in his preface; "There's a sort of piety here, a kindness, a scent of grace, as well as turps meths ammonia nail polish remover and kerosene. Here are the means for dignity." His commentary is not only a litany of the "black hydrangea wall-paper/and baths as old as verandahs" (2) but a warm reminder of New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s, when supple leather boots were more important than Sunday clothes and a well-polished coal range was the heart of a home. Kyle's Heteropolis Press imprint, used for seven of his eleven post-1996 collections, references his poem cycle Heteropolis, first published in 1998. The book was supported by the Buller Community Arts Council.

**2002: Kyle, Leicester. *A Wedding in Tintown*. Millerton: Leicester Kyle, 2002.
<http://leicesterkyle1.blogspot.co.nz/2011/03/wedding-in-tintown-2002.html>.**

This 35-page poem sequence, published online after his death, marks the shift in Kyle's work from his 'outsider' role to that of local. "We think as Coasters people of the west" (20), he says, describes the wedding of an older local couple, members of the alternative community of the Millerton, Granity and Hector, as a narration of events beginning with the ceremony, conducted at a picnic table by the sea, and flowing through the celebration feast and party at the local hall; the flavour is in the sharp-eyed commentary which points

up a community accustomed to making do with little money, which has its own conventions and values, which takes lawlessness and eccentricity for granted but respects dignity and grace. “The men in beards and close-cut jeans look Irish and about to be challenged,” Kyle comments, “The women wear long dresses layed-over clothes and practical feet” and everyone looks fortyish.”⁽⁷⁾ The pot-luck meal is shared with borrowed plates and mis-matched glasses, the wedding gifts are pots and rocks and herbs and wooden shelves, the music is live and local and as the night wears on the drunk and quarrelsome are managed with rough kindness. Between 1999 and his death in 2006 Kyle wrote 15 longer works and a number of short poems and sequences, many of which have been published only online, and edited the online poetry journal *Spin*.

2002: Broad, Beverley Basset. *West Coast Reins*. Christchurch: Gauntlet.

This self-published historical romance moves backwards and forwards in time and place, using the conventional device of letters and diaries to help a modern woman find out who her ancestors were and what happened to them. Details of an English family’s immigration to New Zealand in 1863 are reasonably well researched, as are their subsequent environments in Canterbury, Dunedin and Hokitika, where the main action of the story takes place, but the plot relies heavily on coincidence and a Mills & Boon-style emphasis on sex. The book was reprinted by the Akaroa-based author in 2006 along with two sequels, *Erupting Lies* and *Fool’s Gold*,¹⁵⁹ which take the same characters away from the Coast to Otago and the Auckland Islands.

2002: Hawes, Peter. *Royce, Royce, the People’s Choice : The Story of a Young Man and the Sea*. Auckland: Vintage.

Tuna were commercially discovered off the upper West Coast in the 1970s and in the heyday of the fishery over 100 boats from Nelson, Golden Bay, Timaru and other fishing ports worked out of Greymouth or Westport. Most of the catch was albacore, frozen in salt and ice slurry in Greymouth and then sent by container to Spain for canning, but blue-fin tuna were put in coffins, handled with gloves and muslin and flown directly to Japan.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Beverley Bassett Broad, *Erupting Lies*. Banks Peninsula: Akaroa Ostrich, 2006; *Fools’ Gold*. Banks Peninsula: Akaroa Ostrich, 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with tuna fisherman Ivan Thompson, 12 March 2012

Enter Royce Rowland, Hawes' teenage tearaway central character whose escapades at school and around town get him into so much trouble he is sent to sea to work out his salvation. In between hauling nets he reads *The Old Man and the Sea*, and decides to try fishing with hook and line. With the help of a South American prostitute who defects from the Japanese squid fleet, he and the rest of the crew of the fishing vessel *Aurora* land the first blue-fin tuna to cross the Westport wharf. Unlike Hawes' earlier novels, *Royce* is prefaced with a foreword not only suggesting that "the most sincere pub story I have ever heard"(7) is based on real people and real events but also acknowledging and thanking a number of people identified only by their first names. The chapter headings are illustrated with black and white photographs of fish, fishing boats and fishers and an unaccredited painting (115), which also appears in the narrative, of a fisherman being lured by a siren of the sea. Hawes was born and brought up in Westport and did his homework by going out with the fleet and talking to the locals (many of whom will recognise themselves), their mates, the wharf, the pub and the fish and chip shop. The story itself is a riotous romp around the town and across two nations as Royce and Betty fly to Japan with their giant tuna. Appendix One lists approximately 200 well-known nicknames in the Buller district, Appendix Two points out that teenage males think of sex every eighteen seconds: both are pertinent to the novel.

2002: Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. *As Big as a Father*. Wellington: Steele Roberts.

The Paparoa ranges, Blackball, Ngahere and the greenstone rivers predominate in this 68-page collection of poems from and about the Coast; they describe growing up in a railway house beside the Ngahere-Reefton line, crossing the Lewis in an old Datsun, picking up stones on Cobden beach and fearfully being underground at Green's Dip in the Strongman mine in the previously-published 'Inferno (Strongman Mine 1978)'. Carver Bill Mathieson is once again remembered with 'Ching coin jade padlock' (46), and 'On first looking into Pearson's Coal Flat' (50) is a recognition of shared identity and experience. *As Big as a Father* was a finalist in the 2003 Montana Poetry Award.

2003: Maunder, Paul. *Blackball 03*. Blackball: Blackball Press.

Born and educated in Palmerston North, Maunder is a playwright, film director and cultural activist known for his documentary work with the National Film Unit, his screenplay and direction of ‘Sons for the Return Home’ (1979) and ‘Hemi’ (1983), his Wellington theatre group Amamus and his work in community theatre. This collection of stories and poems, written and published at Blackball soon after he and his partner, a midwife, went to live there, highlights contrasting political attitudes between older Coasters and newcomers: ‘The gnomes of Blackball’ (43), read on National Radio in 2005, deals with reactions to a petition to shut down the nearby dredge, ‘No’ (38) reflects on the caregiver’s role with mentally ill adults living in the community, and ‘Pleasing the Prime Minister’ (33) considers domestic and feral cats in a satirical reaction to Helen Clark’s 2000 description of some West Coast attitudes as “fairly feral”.¹⁶¹ ‘On Yer Bike Mate’ (54-87) is the script of a play performed at Blackball on Mayday 2003 with a cast of three, including Maunder, covering the events of the 1908 crib-time strike through the eyes of Bob Semple, Pat Hickey, and Walter and Elizabeth Rogers. The actors are both commentators and players, the script incorporates songs and poems such as ‘Joe Hill’ and ‘The Red Flag’, and Eric Beardsley’s *Blackball 08* is acknowledged in the text.

2003: Kyle, Leicester. *Panic Poems*. Buller: Heteropholis Press.

The title underlines the quiet, sometimes desperate wrestling with small demons that comes with living at “a bad address” – or a small, isolated, West Coast community – where “You must have antecedents and connections, be traceable, else they’ll think you’re out of Auckland.”(3) The problems of erratic water-supplies and unfathomable neighbourly etiquette, having to drive too far to do the shopping, and maintaining routines where time and date are irrelevant are all part of the adjustments recorded during Kyle’s first six years in Calliope Street, Millerton, where he and his dog Red spend their days gardening, botanising, cleaning the spouting, philosophising and getting older.

¹⁶¹ Comment on a radio talkback show, reported by NZPA, Greymouth, 14 April 2000.

2003: Tremain, Rose. *The Colour*. London: Random House.

British writer Rose Tremain has won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Whitbread Award and the Orange Prize for fiction: this is her tenth novel and the only one set in New Zealand. *The Colour* is about an English couple who come to Canterbury in 1864 in search of new beginnings, discover they have neither the skills nor the focus to farm successfully and are lured one by one to the West Coast, he to make his fortune on the goldfields, she to rescue their failing marriage. They meet again on the Kokatahi goldfields fields only to be separated by a flood: she forms a relationship with Chinese gardener and becomes pregnant by him, they find gold and both men return to their home countries, leaving her to a new life in Canterbury. The emotional journey of central character Harriet Blackstone drives the story, the writing is superior and the descriptions of the pass, the goldfields and the river are well-researched and convincing. The sub-plot, about an unusual Maori-Pakeha relationship, reveals spiritual elements of the bush and makes the point that pounamu, a metaphor for identity and belonging, is more precious than gold.

2003: Todd, Penelope. *Watermark*. Dunedin: Longacre Press.

Coming to South Westland is a rite of passage in this young adult novel about 18-year-old city girl Zillah, who accepts a challenge from unknown friends to abandon her safe summer job for a week and find her way to an isolated hut where she learns to deal not only with tide and river but also with her physical and spiritual being. Zillah starts at Jacksons, gets a lift south past Hokitika and Ross then crosses the river to 'Roimata' and a different world: dealing with a remorseful murderer, a catastrophic flood and a newborn baby is not part of the plan, but these and other events shape her being. The title refers both to the watermark on her letter of invitation and to the mark the wild water has left on her soul. The landscape is critical to the story, not only in the way it is peopled with tolerant, far-seeing and slightly 'whacky' Coasters but also in the way it provides its own 'truths' – food for the body, clear water bubbling out of the earth at the start of a river, trees, hammocks and other places high off the ground where Hep, Joss and Zillah get fresh perspectives on the world. Once again the Coast is a metaphor for a different state of being. Roimata provides an awakening, but there are hints of dark forces in this first novel of a trilogy.

2003: Pattrick, Jenny. *The Denniston Rose*. Auckland: Black Swan, 2003.

The book that made the Denniston coal mine famous; this historical first novel had five reprints in 2003 and four in 2004, was serialised on National Radio, was number one on the New Zealand best-seller list for an unprecedented two years, has sold over 100,000 copies to date and is to be released in a film version. The story starts in 1882 when five-year-old Rose arrives on the hill with her mother Eva, a prostitute with a past, and charms her way into the hearts and lives of the people on Denniston and Burnett's Face. Pattrick uses the incline as a dramatic device to introduce Denniston as a world apart, gradually revealing past lives and secrets in the context of a society where people are dependent on each other socially, physically and emotionally but are not always worthy of trust. Midlands miner Josiah Scobie is modelled on John Lomas, a Methodist lay preacher and unionist who led a group of 30 British miners to Denniston in 1881 and subsequently to form the Denniston Miners' Protection Society, the first miners' union on the Coast, and led them through a successful six-month strike for better conditions: part of the novel's appeal lies in the Scobie family's solidarity, their passion for band music and singing and their fervent religious discipline. Rose becomes Rose of Tralee when she sings her way into their hearts, but she is both victim and cunning survivor, challenging the moral values of those who know her.

2003: Snow, Simon. *Devil's Apple*. Auckland: Random House.

A first novel by Geraldine writer Simon Snow, this contemporary thriller set around Greymouth and the Nile River commune features a woman detective trying to fit in with the macho world of policing on the Coast, a former British cop hiding out under a witness protection programme and a family of alternative lifestylers dabbling in witchcraft. The murder of a young woman called Rainbow sets off a chain of events involving deerstalkers, helicopter pilots, cannabis growers and crooked cops, with a strong emphasis on the physical and cultural isolation of the Coast and its tolerance of the more eccentric and quirky characters in society. Inevitably the hippies are called Starlight and have their own milking goat; 'The Hermit', 'Skinny Bill' and 'The Forest Fairy' (with a computer and Internet connection deep in the bush) all play a part in the story; when the main protagonists need to get alongside the locals they borrow the pub guitar and play 'Danny

Boy' and 'Sloop John B'; and the violence escalates to a dramatic shootout where the 'good guys' win.

2003: Thomas, Carol. *The Cost of Courage*. Auckland: HarperCollins.

Set at Reefton and Black's Point, this historical novel draws on the circumstances of British immigrants in the Buller region in the 1880s. Central character Alice and her father moved from Canterbury to the Coast after she was raped by a drunken sailor; her son is brought up as her younger brother and when her father dies she is forced by economic circumstances to marry a widower with a young child. A Maori child dies after Alice gives it medicine; their home is burned down in revenge and they move to a tent camp at Blacks Point where they live in primitive and unsanitary conditions alongside Cornish mining families who find work at the Energetic Mine, an underground quartz gold-mining operation.¹⁶² The story points up the precarious lifestyles of under-resourced immigrant labourers and their families and, when Alice's brother runs away to sea, the seedy underside of the Greymouth waterfront.

2003: Grace-Smith, Briar. *Potiki's Memory of Stone*. Wellington: Playmarket.

The legend of Poutini turning to greenstone in the Arahura River is central to this story set in the late 20th century in the small West Coast town of 'Tihore', "a try hard town that exists only cause it believes it does" (Scene 2 p5). Potiki's ancestors travelled the Poutini coast looking for a place to settle and, when they found it, sacrificed a young girl, Noanoa, in the river, where she turned to kokopu, a variety of pounamu with red flecks in it. Potiki becomes a talented carver working for his Pakeha mother and Maori stepfather at 'Ngahue's Fish', a workshop turning out greenstone ornaments for tourists, but his mother is a drunkard who gambles the money away; Potiki falls in love with Tui, a North Island Maori doing a thesis on the greenstone trails, and things become complicated when his real father returns and reveals a guilty secret from the Vietnam war and another one closer to home. As the story develops, the characters take on the mythical roles of searcher, watcher and finder, the kokopu and the river assume major importance and Tui becomes a modern

¹⁶² Elaine E Bolitho, *Reefton School of Mines; Stories of Jim Bolitho*, Reefton: Friends of Waiuta Inc, 1999. The Energetic was one of seven underground quartz mines in the Murray Creek area serviced by Blacks Point, which had a population of around 600 in the early 1980s.

sacrifice. The script blends Maori and English, music and rhetoric with contemporary dialogue; the kotuku (white heron) is emblematic of the Coast but the secondary theme of Maori re-discovering their spiritual roots is universal. The play was performed at Auckland and Wellington arts festivals in 2003 and produced for National Radio on 4 May 2008.

2004: Kyle, Leicester. *Miller Creek*. Buller: Heteropholis Press.

Miller Creek flows through Millerton from out of the Old Dip mine at the northern edge of the Buller coal plateau and, like most of the creeks in the area, has historically been badly damaged by chemicals and minerals released from the rocks through underground and open cast mining. With time and good management such waterways are healing themselves and the poems in this collection celebrate that process by examining in some detail the flora and fauna of the creek and its surrounds. Kyle not only writes about the “neopanax, totara, filmy ferns and moss” (4) but also acknowledges the flowing water as “the manuscript of my life” (5) whose rhythm shapes his days and nights. The creek’s journey is an adventure in microcosm, evoking alpine heights, tunnels and cataracts, nurturing birds and insects but, in its still-corrupted state, recording human failure. The second part of this book describes the cycle of the seasons at Millerton, as seen by a year-round resident: autumn is “a directive time of year” (10) when it pays to heed the warnings and be prepared because in winter, Kyle concedes, “In such conditions it’s hard to run a house” (11). This collection is illustrated with sketches by Joel Bolton.

2004: Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. *The Late Great Blackball Bridge Sonnets*. Wellington: Steele Roberts.

For the boys of Blackball the big wood and iron bridge across the Mawheranui River was a way to the outside world – high school, rugby, dances and the bright lights of Greymouth – but for Holman the poet, “The bridge is now a way of getting across time to the past.” (6) This collection is a book of memories from his teenage years, written after May 2002 when *New Zealand Listener* published a photograph of the derelict bridge (“four spans and a gorse plantation” p5), and it is illustrated with historical black and white photographs. Like the poems they are snapshots of the bridge, the town and its people: the miners’ bathhouse (“a cathedral of nudes” p51); the Blackball Freemasons of 1910 (“The town was flush with

halls; the Miners, the Druids and Buffalos, the Order of Oddfellows” p31); Campbell’s Hotel (“Secret codes to/get in for a beer ... ” p47). This is not a romanticised history, rather a frank recollection of the bad as well as the good considered and re-shaped from an adult perspective. The youth says “ ... half-hidden in/the beech’s branches I could see the town walk by,” (42) but the mature poet knows “The town is not a goldfish bowl, it’s a hive/of secrets”. (49) The 45 stanzas that comprise the work are each in 14-line sonnet form and the last records lines from headstones in the Blackball cemetery, in tribute to men and women who died between 1919 and 2000.

2004: Todd, Penelope. *Dark*. Dunedin: Longacre Press.

This sequel to *Watermark* takes Zillah, Hep and Joss back to Roimata, where Joss suffers increasing psychological and spiritual dislocation, to the distress of his sister and friend. Once again the landscape provides tension, this time in the form of a dysfunctional freeloading ‘bad fairy’ called Flea, and, finally, healing. Todd accentuates the idea of the Coast as a place apart and leans heavily on visual symbolism; former psychiatric nurse Rex, who influences the behaviour of others, has a tattooed snake on his arm ending at his fingertip; he identifies and deals with Joss’s psychogenic episodes but remains enigmatic. Water plays a significant part in the story as does the kotuku, whose dive from a cabbage tree into the sea at the beginning of the book is frighteningly echoed by Joss’s final dive into the river from a kahikatea on the cliff top. His rebirth into sanity coincides with a celebration that has its roots in paganism, as the itinerant Roimata locals sing, dance and cast flower petals into the river mouth to welcome the return of the whitebait.

2004: Pattrick, Jenny. *Heart of Coal*. Auckland: Black Swan.

This sequel to *The Denniston Rose*, also a best-seller, moves the main characters forward to the turn of the 20th century and eventually to the end of the coal mining settlements on the hill when Rose is an old woman and the last resident of Denniston. Pattrick emphasises the bond between locals and landscape, brings in links with the wider Coast and Canterbury, and develops the back story of Con the Brake who later features in the spin-off novel *Catching the Current* (Auckland: Black Swan, 2005)

2004: Hulme, Keri. *Stonefish*. Wellington, N.Z.: Huia Publishers.

“A stonefish is at once a venomous fish and, in Maori narrative, pounamu (greenstone, jade), which swam to the West Coast of Aotearoa New Zealand’s South Island in the form of a fish,” the cover blurb reads. In these dark stories nothing is exactly what it seems. The author as narrator sets herself adrift with floating words in a waterworld of bubble cities and survival rafts, examining the Coast as a continuum of ancient and future worlds. Hulme makes her strongest point in ‘Getting it’ (89-106), in which a local body planning hearing is attended by ancient beings, fairy folk of land, sea and mist, who call the Coasters to account for the environmental damage they have caused. “The news isn’t good from what remains of the Coast ...”(103) the narrator concludes after she and her friend, the only empathetic people at the meeting, heed the warning and flee back across the Alps to live quietly by a far southern lake while toxic algae, wild weather and earthquake swarms devastate South Westland. This is a brooding, shape-shifting collection which draws new meanings from the pounamu legends.

2004: Kelly, Kaye. *Cross the River to Home*. Auckland: Black Swan.

In this sequel to the privately-published *Mecca’s Gold* (1988), storekeeper Henry Bramwell falls in love with Fong Mai, a half-Chinese girl whose grandfather arranges her marriage to an opportunistic older Chinese worker in their market garden. When Mai has Henry’s child and her husband tries to kill them both, Henry takes the mother and child in and faces the consequences of their cross-cultural relationship. The backdrop is the community of miners and service industry workers, many with culturally ignorant and racist attitudes towards the Chinese although the Maori family in the novel are treated with dignity as equals. The story hinges on cultural stereotypes; the hard-working and long-suffering Chinese market gardeners, the canny and irascible Scotsman, the Irish barmaid with the heart of gold and the flashy con-man, but is historically accurate and informative about the isolation of Coast settlements and the hardships and dangers of travel by land and sea.

2004: Sweeney, Paddy. *The Lost Tribe of Jacksons Bay*. Bundall QLD: Delafon Press.

Subtitled ‘How the West Coast was Lost (Almost)’, this fourth title in expatriate Coaster Sweeney’s ‘Good Bastards’ series is a self-styled politically-incorrect reaction to the

Labour Government's closure of sawmills and goldmines on the Coast and to Prime Minister Helen Clark's much-publicised reference to Coasters as 'feral'. "That hurt me and a lot of others deeply," the author notes (222). To the men at the Good Bastards pub in Jacksons Bay, Prime Minister 'Noreen Clack' and Department of Conservation officer Pig Pearson are the face of the enemy and the stories revolve around getting even with them. Sweeney is the founder and director of startup company Westcoast Brewing which operates breweries and Good Bastard restaurants, encourages larrikinism and works the celebrity speaking circuit in New Zealand and Australia.

2005: Smith, Phil. *The Unknown Zone*. Auckland: Random House.

Although most of the action takes place on the Coromandel Peninsula, this young adults' novel is included because its main protagonists are the fictional descendants of the Ngati Wairangi people who were driven out of their Mawhera pa by marauding Ngai Tahu moving up the West Coast from Jacksons Bay. In this story the invaders capture an Australian sealing gang in South Westland and progressively kill and eat all but two of them, an Englishman who had been their leader, and an Irish lad. The survivors escape across the Taramakau River in time to warn Mawhera Maori (who include 'Terapuhi'), fleeing with them further up the coast to Whanganui Inlet and from there by waka to the Whanganui River and on to the Coromandel where Ngati Wairangi re-establish themselves among their North Island relatives, Ngati Hei, and their new English friend marries into the tribe. Over 150 years later Ngati Hei are on the verge of losing their land to unscrupulous forestry and mining interests when the hero of the story, a descendant of the West Coast refugees, finds a long-lost cache of Ngati Wairangi greenstone artefacts, Coromandel gold and original land titles, and uses them to restore the fortunes of his people. Songs and legends passed down through the generations form an important part of the narrative, as does the greenstone pendant Moanawhakamana which was brought from Mawhera, lost in the river and found by the great-great-grandson of the original owner. Phil Smith is a former journalist living at Mt Maunganui and this is his first novel.

2005: Atkinson, Coral. *The Love Apple*. Auckland: Black Swan.

Irish-born Canterbury writer Coral Atkinson uses Ross in Westland as the setting for this late 19th century romance but avoids the goldfields theme, making her main character a photographer and thus utilising the landscape as an empty canvas for the protagonists to meet on. Sixteen-year-old Huia Bluett, who is part-Maori, and her father work as packers, managing horses and gear for itinerate tourists and travellers, which allows the author to introduce historical Coast figures such as the Danish couple who run the Harihari hotel. Recognisable Coast legends include the story of ‘Bridey Coulaghan’ whose drunken rampage with a revolver and a pistol is stopped with Irish cunning, Fenian John Dillon, who toured the Coast to whip up support for Irish Home Rule, and the Hatter’s Hut, an old diggers hut where the children play. Themes of love and duty are pointed up by Irishman PJ, who enlists to fight as a New Zealander on the side of the British but changes sides when his loyalties are challenged by Irish mercenaries fighting with the Boer. Alienation is a strong thread running through the novel: of Maori who are tangata whenua but made to feel second-class; of the West Coast boy who does not belong in a snobbish Canterbury boarding school; the trapeze artist who uses her beauty and talents to ape British society women; the political activist who keeps the faith on his own; the English governess who is culturally and socially stranded on a high country sheep station; the widower who is trapped by his sexual needs. The ‘love apple’ is a tomato, symbol of new ideas. “Huia thought it looked like fire: bright, exciting and dangerous. “Can I have a taste?” she said. “No,” said her father. It wouldn’t be good for you.” (46)

2005: Bridger, Bub, *Wild Daisies, the best of Bub Bridger*. Wellington: Mallinson Rendel.

Bridger came to the Coast late in her life and died in Granity in 2009. Of Maori (Ngati Kahungunu) and Irish descent, she fitted in so well she might have been born a Coaster. In this ‘best of’ collection there are four poems written in Granity, including the defiant ‘Blatant Resistance’: “....Look at me now with springs in/ My heels and the wind in my hair,” and the accompanying CD was recorded on the Coast. Bridger was a performance poet and a long-term member of the Wellington-based Hen’s Teeth Collective; while she was at Granity she regularly participated in poetry evenings at Drifters Cafe.

2005: Faith, Rangi. *Conversation with a moa hunter*. Wellington: Steele Roberts.

These are the poems of a teacher, in touch with the young and their questions, and of a historian who ponders the people, such as Petrus van der Velden, Samuel Butler, Captain Cook and Peter Blake, behind the artefacts and museum exhibits. Among the mostly Canterbury poems are two about the Otira Gorge ('Nightfall at Otira', p46, and 'The spirit of greenstone and the Dutch school of painting meet in the Otira Gorge', p47), and another that is evocative of the Coast landscape ('When fishermen turn to poetry', p13). Faith has published other collections focussed on the Canterbury district.

2005: Kyle, Leicester, and John Crawford. *Breaker : A Progress of the Sea*. Westport: Heteropolis Press.

Kyle was inspired by the Catalogue of Armed Forces in the second book of Homer's *The Iliad*, which he read in Pope's translation; fascinated by both the idea and the poetry of it, he applied the concept to the battle of Buller people against the eroding coastline (2). The 76-page collection is illustrated with black and white sketches by Hector potter and artist John Crawford; 'The Forces' are West Coast legends, composites of local people each set in actual communities along the Buller coastline, each introduced in a formally-structured eight-line stanza. There is Paul from Karamea, who understands which driftwood makes the best fires (14); Raewyn who keeps the backpackers' and is tough (18); Moltz from Germany who "looks through Tolkien's eyes ... and animates the bush"(26); Larry who fights the eroding sea with gravel and bulldozers (32) and Andy who "stopped/a seal from using the cellphone/he had dropped" (71). In his empathetic and often quirky drawing of the battle lines Kyle writes of Granity and Ngakawau, Birchfield and the Port, the mayor and the Department of Conservation, but concedes in the last poem, 'Bridge to the Sea' (76), that "The sea is the majority ... we must make a bridge/and learn/to like/the food".

2006: Lay, Graeme. *Alice & Luigi*. Auckland: David Ling.

Historical fiction based on the ill-fated 1875 settlement at Jackson Bay in South Westland and the subsequent move by Italian fishermen to Makara and Island Bay in Wellington, this novel purports to record the progress of a descendant tracing his great-grandparents. Real West Coast people and events in the first half of the novel include the Newman brothers,

Richard Seddon and ‘King’ Macfarlane who employed and supervised the Jackson Bay road-builders, and the back stories of the main characters touch on the communities and conditions in Westport, Hokitika and Jackson Bay in the 1880s. The Italians in the novel are treated with suspicion and contempt not only in Wellington, where they are organised by government officials into work gangs when they first arrive in New Zealand, but also on the Coast: their attempts to clear land and grow vines and crops fail abysmally, Macfarlane is a harsh and self-serving exploiter of labour who “hates anyone who is not of British stock” (54), Luigi’s cousin is abandoned by his Maori wife when he loses his leg in an accident, and Luigi’s own relationship with British-born Alice is unacceptable to her family. This is Lay’s only West Coast work and may be loosely based on his own ancestry.

2006: Patrick, Jenny. *The Illustrated Denniston Rose and Heart of Coal*. Black Swan. Auckland: Random House.

Historical and fictional illustrations merge to authenticate both the physical and cultural landscapes of Patrick’s Denniston novels: by providing photographs, maps, diagrams and even a repeated but uncaptioned photographic image of central character Rose, the publishers have blurred the line between fact and fiction in a way that appears to “legitimate and sustain settler cultural dominance.”¹⁶³ While, ostensibly, this illustrated omnibus edition validates the authenticity of Patrick’s historical research, it not only endorses a popular contemporary European perspective on colonialism but also appears to embed fictional information into the history of the Coast; for example the ballad ‘The Denniston Rose’ which appears in the 2003 novel as “a heart-rending little song about Rose ... often sung in the parlours of Westport” (361) is reproduced in the 2006 illustrated version as a page of 1880s sheet music. ‘Then and now’ photographs of the now-famous Incline and other features of Denniston have boosted what has become a significant tourist attraction and an economic boost for the district; a feature film is in development and work has begun on restoring the old Banbury Mine to a working tourist experience where visitors can kit up, go underground and shovel coal as men did on the hill 130 years before.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ A F Tyson, *Dehistoricised Histories: The Cultural Significance of Recent Popular New Zealand Historical Fiction*, MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2007, 61.

¹⁶⁴ Jim Eagles, ‘West Coast: How Denniston Rose again’, *NZ Herald.com.nz*, 12 May 2010, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/news/article.cfm?c_id=7&objectid=10644196.

2006: Hunt, Des. *Frog Whistle Mine*. Auckland: HarperCollins.

Set in a modern Charleston, this children's novel has 12-year-old Tony arriving with his mother Christine at what looks to him like the end of the road. The setting and characters are contemporary but the plot harks back to earlier West Coast themes: a hotel which is the social centre of the community; an eccentric old miner with secrets; tourists and locals. There's a mysterious man who hates the French, a geologist who is predicting earthquakes and a secret uranium mine (uranium was found on the coast). Tony uncovers what he thinks is a murder, finds it is not, but acts bravely and according to his beliefs. He is the hero. His mother is a modern 'solo mum', flawed but loyal, who falls in love with the geologist. The mine has whistling frogs around it, there are weka families in the bush and there is good fishing. The tag line on the cover is "Who can you trust in a town full of strangers?" Tony's girlfriend Rose, whose grandparents own the hotel, is an interesting adolescent version of the wise woman; she sets up an online gossip column about guests and locals and facilitates a community response to Tony's dilemma.

2007: Hunt, Des. *Shadows in the Ice*. Auckland: HarperCollins.

A sequel to *Frogwhistle Mine*, in which Tony returns to the Coast with Nick the geologist, who is now living with him and his mother in Christchurch and has a research project in South Westland, and befriends intellectually handicapped Murray, who is the local fellmonger, practical joker, protector of birds and unwitting guardian of a valuable cache of greenstone. Seven years earlier Murray was accused of accidentally shooting his mate Duggie while they were hunting thar on the glacier; the body was never found, but, according to local wisdom, it is expected to surface any time. The plot involves Duggie's former girlfriend Livia, now a tour operator and glacier guide, and her sinister German partner: when things go wrong, Tony's mother and girlfriend turn up from Christchurch to help. The Franz Josef environment in this adventure story for young adults is contemporary and convincing: it includes an intelligent kea, helicopter tourism, a wild ride down the river on falling ice floes as the glacier breaks up, and, as one of the minor characters, a particularly wise and empathetic policeman.

2007: Todd, Penelope. *Zillah*. Dunedin: Longacre Press.

In this third novel in the Watermark trilogy Zillah returns to Roimata alone and unexpected, looking for healing after a bad experience in Spain. The novel is heavy with symbolism, beginning with the now-familiar river crossing; the canoe enters the water, is caught up in the stream and rushed towards the ocean until the paddler steers it to the slow brown side-waters, time out from the mainstream of life. This time, however, Roimata is no longer safe – the army has taken possession, mock-battle scenes are being filmed and Zillah is ordered off. Disoriented and still struggling with her Spanish ordeal, she has to go upriver, climbing deep into the bush to meet Joseph (Joss from the previous novels). There are outcasts and oddballs in the bush: a mentally and physically fit gay man who is empathetic and helpful; an ‘off-his-head’ survivalist who is keen on red meat and conspiracy theories; and two macho hunters displaying stereotypical kiwi maleness. Zillah and Joseph climb impossibly high and risk their lives staggering back, become embroiled in Martin’s weird and violent world, sort out his devils and carry him out to be rescued, and find their time for romance back at Roimata by a driftwood fire, “ ... as the sea sighed and boomed, and the tide rose or fell.” The West Coast is an isolated and dangerous place in this novel, which moves the two main characters from adolescence to adulthood.

2007: Kelly, Kaye. *A Secret Mind*. Auckland: Black Swan.

The third in Kelly’s series of West Coast historical novels featuring Henry and Mai Bramwell, this story centres around working people, the sawmillers and carpenters, bar attendants, shop keepers and carters, in the town of Stafford, between Hokitika and Greymouth. The main character is Libby, a child who suffers from communication difficulties and epileptic fits resulting from a head injury when she was four. She witnesses a murder, is abused and persecuted by one of the murderers (who becomes her stepfather), and is eventually removed to the mental asylum on the outskirts of Hokitika¹⁶⁵. The novel includes a well-researched and historically accurate description of the asylum as it explores the powers of jailers and medical practitioners in an era when drunkards, epileptics and the insane were locked away and frequently abandoned unless someone claimed them or

¹⁶⁵ The asylum, later Seaview Psychiatric Hospital, was still operating in the 1980s.

vouched for them. A secondary theme is the plight of 19th century women who lost their husbands, through accident or desertion, and faced the prospects of supporting themselves and their families or marrying again and losing their legal rights, and the role of the Women's Temperance Union in supporting wives and families beaten by drunken husbands. There's a distinct touch of 20th century political correctness in the narrative, which includes Maori and Chinese characters and touches on racist attitudes but pays little attention to the landscape in what is essentially a romantic drama with a conventional and rather contrived happy ending.

2007: Norcliffe, James. *Villon in Millerton*. Auckland: University Press.

This sixth poetry collection by Norcliffe is included because of the title poem, which is dedicated to Leicester Kyle and references his home in Calliope Street, Millerton, where in the poem the fifteenth-century troubadour Villon, exiled from France for his crimes, hides out. Reviewer Harvey Molloy sees Norcliffe's Villon as "the kiwi man alone ... in exile from domestic life and on the run from the cops."¹⁶⁶ The extraordinary physical environment of the plateau lends itself to the anger and defiance evoked by "two miles/above the flatlanders/screaming" (1), and the Korean squid boats lighting up the horizon are countered by the "Lion Brown and Millerton Green" of a good West Coast party (4) in the familiar world of chipped Formica, strangled drains and "borrowed clapboard/hanging on the side/of a clapped-out house"(5). The bohemian Villon is contrasted with missionary Samuel Marsden; in another long poem at the end of the collection Norcliffe muses on the differences between Australian and New Zealand perceptions of goodness and godliness.

2008: McGill, David. *The Mock Funeral: A Novel of the Irish Riots on the Goldfields of New Zealand*. Paekakariki: Silver Owl Press.

McGill published this novel as a companion volume to his earlier non-fiction account of the 1868 demonstrations on the West Coast goldfields, *The Lion and the Wolfhound*.¹⁶⁷ The Mock Funeral is narrated by young Keith Shaw, whose dual roles as junior reporter for his

¹⁶⁶ Harvey Molloy, 'Villon in Millerton,' <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/vim>, viewed 10 April 2012

¹⁶⁷ David McGill, *The Lion and the Wolfhound : The Irish Rebellion on the New Zealand Goldfields*, Wellington: Grantham House, 1990.

uncle's West Coast Times newspaper and rather inept spy for the government authorities make him an eyewitness to the funeral procession led by Father Larkin in honour of the Manchester Martyrs, the subsequent court proceedings and the rebellious response of the Irish goldminers at Addison's Flat. The Irish 'Mock Funeral' held at Hokitika alarmed the government and inflamed the Catholic/Protestant conflict on the Coast but, as Keith Shaw slowly works out, the situation is exacerbated by local authorities, including his uncle. McGill tells his story in the language and style of the day, and includes very detailed accounts of the legal arguments during the trials of the seven men, including Father Larkin, arrested for their part in the Hokitika cemetery incident. McGill, who uses contemporary newspaper records to reinforce his account and fictitious minor characters to dramatise it, highlights the role of Warden Kynnersley, who historically averted an impending battle by approaching in turn the leaders of each contingent, the Orange and the Green, and overstating the strength of their opposition.

2008: Sturgeon, Graeme. *Beneath the Southern Cross*. Waiuku: Mackay Books.

This second novel by Sturgeon¹⁶⁸ is set on the West Coast in 1800, when a New England sealing gang working in Fiordland is attacked by Maori from further up the Coast. The sole survivor, Lafe Erickson, is forced to become a Pakeha Maori belonging to the Okarito-based tribe who are themselves under threat from Ngai Tahu; over the next decade they slowly move north to Murderer's Bay where they establish themselves near the mouth of the Aorere river. Lafe makes his way to the Marlborough Sounds but is captured by Te Rauparaha and taken to Kapiti Island, and it is 1832 before Port Underwood whaler Jacky Guard finally smuggles him onto an American whaler and he sails for home. The author's hunting experience in South Westland, his personal knowledge of Coast and Cook Strait waterways and his familiarity with the inland tracks and trails that link Marlborough, Golden Bay and the Coast make this story, inspired by that of whaler James Caddell who was captured by southern Maori in 1806, gripping in its detail; although European place names are not used the locations are accurately described and the slow journey up the West Coast, its pace dictated by the seasonal availability of food, provides an insight into the way pre-European hunter-gatherers depended on orally-transmitted knowledge.

¹⁶⁸ Sturgeon's first novel, *Dustoff for Willie Peters* (Picton: River Press, 1998), was set largely in the North Island and in Vietnam but included professional hunting trips in Fiordland and South Westland.

2009: Battye, Susan, and Thelma Eakin. “*The Mine’s Afire!*” : *The Journal of Tommy Carter, Brunnerton, 1896*. Auckland: Scholastic New Zealand.

In the Scholastic series of young adult fiction, this historical diary is based on the true story of William Mosely, a Brunnerton schoolboy whose father was injured in the Brunner mine disaster. Like the play it derives from (*Shadow of the Valley*, 1980), it uses historical characters and events as a basis for the story which is structured around the diary of a 12-year-old boy who plays the cornet in the Brunnerton band. It was a finalist in the NZ Post Book Awards 2009.

2009: Hall, Margaret. *Return for the Gold*. Dunedin: Longacre Press.

This children’s novel is a sequel to *Swag and Tucker* (1993) and picks up the story three years on when the settlers at Gillespie’s Beach in South Westland have turned their attention from black-sand mining to cattle farming. Despite intensive searching, the families had never found their stolen gold and the bushranger who had taken it escapes from Lyttelton jail and plans to recover it from its hiding place. The plot turns on his theatrical skills, gained while touring the gold-mining districts of Victoria, Otago, Coromandel and the Coast, and once again emphasises the European and Scandinavian origins of the South Westland families, drawing on the historical origins of the district’s accommodation and tourist industry.

2009: Hawes, Peter. *The Gods of Warm Beer*. Wellington: Playmarket.

The setting is Westport during the 1951 waterfront strike; the conflicts are Catholic versus Protestant, union versus Government, and rugby union versus rugby league, with an overarching political tussle between New Zealand and America, and this play showcases not only the insularity and ingrained prejudices of 1950s West Coasters and, by extension, New Zealanders in general, but also their feisty optimism, literally earthed by an underground mining scene which is central to the storyline. It contains autobiographical elements: the two main characters Billy and Rory are head-hunted by an English Rugby League team and sign contracts for Huddersfield, just as the author’s own father Bob Hawes and Greymouth player Billy Dixon did. Hawes’ script calls for a ‘Greek chorus’ of locals: coal miners Pook and Max, publicans Gloria and Skin, who provide a running commentary on life, Coast characters and the love affairs of Billy (with the publicans’

daughter) and Rory (with a married woman). The sacred cows of Coast culture – sex, rugby, religion and unionism – are here in abundance: Skin wrongly assumes his daughter has to get married because she is “duffed up,” but when he learns she is marrying a League player he reaches for the shotgun. The action plays out against a backdrop of political deals between Joe McCarthy, J Edgar Hoover, Harry Truman and Sid Holland, with Keith Holyoake as Holland’s grovelling bag man. The play is technically ambitious, with a cast of 10 actors playing 22 characters between them: Court Theatre production director Ross Gumbley describes it as “a phenomenally layered piece of theatre”¹⁶⁹ while Hawes himself says it is “my attempt to write Tennessee Williams as if he had a sense of humour”¹⁷⁰. ‘The Gods of Warm Beer’ premiered at Centrepont Palmerston North on 19 June 2008 and opened at the Court Theatre in Christchurch on 28 March 2009, but to date has not been staged on the Coast.

2009: Atkinson, Coral and Christine Brown. *Copper Top*. Lyttelton: Dancing Tuatara.

Set around Hokitika in the late 1860s, this young adults’ novel has the traditional elements of goldfields fiction: rough but kindly diggers of all races (Maori, Chinese, German and Irish are specifically mentioned), an exploitative hotel manager, selfish and shallow dance-hall girls, a widowed miner who works her claim dressed like a man, a lovable stray dog and a happy ending for the 15-year-old Irish orphan who has emigrated to find her brother. The author is a West Coaster who has written adult historical fiction (*The Love Apple*, 2005) and she describes the rough, grubby, makeshift and often dangerous conditions of the goldfields in terms a modern adolescent can understand. There’s a Cinderella motif; the plot hinges around a shoe, the heroine had learned her father’s trade as a shoemaker and the story ends happily with her opening a goldfields store with her family and friends.

2009: Bennetts, Marlene J. *Spirit Valley*. Christchurch: Emjay Publishing.

This young adults’ novel features a 15-year-old Danish immigrant, Johanna Thomasen, who arrives in Nelson alone after her mother dies on the voyage out. They had come from

¹⁶⁹ Ross Gumbley, quoted in www.theatreview.org.nz/reviews/production.php?id=1061 THE GODS OF WARM BEER.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Hawes, www.theatreview.org.nz/reviews/production.php?id=1061 THE GODS OF WARM BEER.

Copenhagen to join her whaler father, who sent for them after he bought land on the West Coast, but Johanna is met with the news that her father has drowned and she must return to Denmark. Instead she runs away from the minister's house dressed as a boy, takes a boat to Hokitika and sets about finding her father's land. She turns 16 in a Hokitika boarding house, buys a horse, dog, goat and provisions and moves to her father's hut in the Arahura Valley where she is befriended by a Maori family, learns their culture and helps defend their pounamu from poachers. Johanna learned woodcarving skills from her father and is soon making ornaments to sell for provisions. Like Atkinson, Bennetts introduces a self-sufficient female goldminer dressed like a man, in this case an Irish woman called Izzie, and emphasises her protagonist's determined independence and courage in the face of physical danger, but racism is also a major theme as the Danish girl faces stiff opposition to her friendship with Arahura Maori, who are not socially acceptable to the British and Irish colonials. Bennetts (née Anderson) gave Johanna Thomasen her paternal grandmother's name and much of her character: the real Johanna came to New Zealand from Copenhagen with her family to settle in Marlborough where she met her future husband at a dance and moved with him to the Karamea district, where they ran an accommodation house. Bennetts was brought up in sawmilling camps in the Buller region.¹⁷¹

2009: McCormack, Trish. *Assigned to Murder*. Westport: Poutini Press.

Trish McCormack was brought up in Frank Josef, where this first novel is set, and worked on the Coast as a conservation interpreter and journalist. The action takes place between Christchurch, Franz Josef and Lake Kaniere, where the murder of a young journalist is eerily linked to an undiscovered murder which took place decades earlier. McCormack neatly contrasts the wilderness of the Coast with the suburban civilisation and culture across the Alps, emphasising the sinister gloom and dangerous coldness of lake and glacier country by creating equally sinister tensions between the main characters. The Franz Josef tourism industry features, as do sibling relationships, and there are echoes of Dorothy Eden's 1953 novel *Lamb to the Slaughter* not only in the setting and the juxtaposition of urban sophistication and primeval survival instincts but also in the Gothic style of this modern crime thriller. Westport-based Poutini Press was established in 2005, with startup

¹⁷¹ Marlene Bennetts, Interview Christchurch, 10 November 2011.

funding from the West Coast Development Trust, to showcase Coast writing, and this is its second publication: the first is a second edition of *South West New Zealand World Heritage Highway Guide: Hokitika to Wanaka* by Andy Dennis.¹⁷²

2009: Maunder, Paul. *Tornado and other stories written over time*. Nelson: Matai River Press.

Maunder lives at Blackball where he is involved in the Blackball Working Class History Project, is secretary treasurer of the Blackball Museum committee and writes both poetry and prose. *Tornado*, his second short story collection, moves from Greymouth to Wellington, Samoa and Warsaw with six of the fifteen stories, vignettes that explore interpersonal connections, often fleeting, across cultures and ideologies. The title story (3-8), which won the South Island Writers Association Short Story competition and was first published in *Takahe* in 2007, is about an encounter between a lonely miner and a widowed video shop worker (fiction) when a tornado rips through Greymouth in 2005 (fact) providing a 'life and death moment' that awakens their senses. Homebirth (17-32) explores the philosophical and cultural voids between a Blackball contractor, his new Filipino wife and their midwife; 'The gnomes of Blackball' (43-48), first read on National Radio in 2005, highlights contrasting political attitudes between older Coasters and newcomers; 'Journey through the pass' (64-73) describes a moment of intimacy between ambulance drivers and their passengers snowbound for a night on Arthur's Pass; 'Painted in colour' (98-100) describes reactions to alternative stallholders who set up shop outside a conventional retailer; 'The present Buller Gorge' (93-96, first published in *Bravado*, 2006) acknowledges French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard when a motorcycle breaks down and its rider, stranded in the rain with no cellphone coverage, ponders on Thomas Brunner's situation in the same area 150 years earlier and on water cutting through rocks by taking the line of least resistance. Maunder has since completed a doctoral thesis on community theatre in New Zealand¹⁷³ and in 2011 he published *Coal and The Coast*¹⁷⁴, a

¹⁷² Andy Dennis, *South West New Zealand World Heritage Highway Guide: Hokitika to Wanaka*, Westport: Poutini Press, 2007.

¹⁷³ Paul Maunder, 'The Rebellious Mirror before and after 1984 : Community-Based Theatre in Aotearoa', PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Maunder, *Coal and the Coast*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2011.

reflection on the November 2010 Pike River disaster to which he was one of the first locals to respond.

2010: Bennetts, Marlene J. *Beyond the Zigzag*. Christchurch: Emjay Publishing.

Bennetts' fourth children's novel *Beyond the Zig Zag* is set in the late 1920s and follows the adventures of 14-year-old Ted Humphries, who runs away from the Timaru orphanage where he has lived since he was eight. The 'Zigzag' is the Otira Gorge, where Ted hitches a ride after buying a train fare as far as Arthurs Pass, and he works his way slowly up the Coast from Otira to Kumara, Blaketown and Blackball, making friends with kindly locals, earning money at a variety of jobs from hotel kitchen work to commercial fishing, butchery and milking cows. Bennetts uses his adventures to showcase the way of life on the Coast and Ted spends a lot of time boiling the billy, lighting coal ranges, chopping wood and eating hearty home cooking, finally finding his way to an old goldminer's hut where he learns basic bush skills such as skinning possums, and finds a moa egg. At the Greymouth fair he meets a girl his own age who was badly disfigured and had her leg amputated many years earlier in a Taylorville mudslide that killed her parents: the story works through to a conventional and sentimental happy ending when they discover they are twins, separated by tragic circumstances when they were both too young to remember. Bennetts, who now lives in Christchurch and publishes her own books, was awarded the ONZM in 2003 for services to literature.

2010: Preston, Gaylene. *Home by Christmas*. Gaylene Preston Productions.

The film describes the effects of World War Two on a Greymouth family, separated when a newly married man enlists and is sent to the Middle East, leaving his pregnant wife at home with her mother and sisters. Based on the true story of the Preston family told through interviews with Gaylene's father Jack, the film begins and ends with the train which takes people away from the Coast and brings them back. It emphasises mateship, resourcefulness, common sense and pragmatism, the downplaying of drama and emotion and the significance of things unsaid. A secondary theme is the wartime role of women, who deal with their own emotions largely in silence but whose stoicism and loyalty is

pivotal to the stability of their menfolk. Preston, who was brought up in Greymouth, and the film's cinematographer Alun Bollinger, who lives near Reefton, have both worked on a number of Coast-based productions. Preston's previous films include 'Kai Purakau – The Storyteller', a 1987 documentary about Keri Hulme, and 'Perfect Strangers,' a 2003 feature film starring Sam Neill, both of which were filmed on the Coast.

2011: Randall, Charlotte. *Hokitika Town*. Auckland: Penguin.

This is Christchurch-based Randall's seventh novel and her first set on the Coast, which she chose because of the wet and rugged conditions which made the Hokitika region the most inaccessible and inhospitable of the 1860s goldfields and therefore provided an extra element of physical challenge to her story.¹⁷⁵ Randall acknowledges the work of Philip Ross May, whose 1962 history¹⁷⁶ provided much of her source material and inspired her to create characters who came to the Coast via California and Australia but whose origins are much more exotic: they talk of China, Germany, Ireland and Spain and their dialogue reflects the fact that English is not necessarily their native language. The plot revolves around this diversity of culture and experience, reflected through the narrator Halfie who is a young boy of mixed Maori and European parentage often baffled by the complexity of adult actions and emotions but resolute in his efforts to survive and prosper as a 'coin boy', a phrase coined by the author to suit his situation and her purpose. Cultural displacement was a major feature of 1860s West Coast society and is correspondingly important in the novel, which explores relationships forged by necessity among the 'diggers, hatters and whores' whose back stories are at once exotic and universal: as Halfie's language, understanding and communication skills develop, so too does his influence on the actions of others, to the point where he and his friends recognise that Hokitika Town has served its purpose and their futures lie elsewhere. *Hokitika Town* also acknowledges the displacement and alienation of tangata whenua, not only through the back story of Halfie and his sister/mother, but by 'shadow play' glimpses of Maori on the fringes.

¹⁷⁵ Charlotte Randall interviewed by Lynne Freeman, Arts on Sundays, National Radio 6 March 2011.

¹⁷⁶ Philip Ross May, *The West Coast Goldfields*, Christchurch: Pegasus, 1962.

2011: Palmer, Geoff. *Too Many Zeros*. Auckland: Penguin.

Geoff Palmer is an award-winning technology writer based in Wellington, best known for his columns and website blog for *New Zealand PC World*. His second novel, *Too Many Zeros* is a science fiction adventure set in the remote West Coast town of 'Rata', recognisably somewhere near Whataroa in South Westland, where a time-travelling space ship has crashed leaving two young alien teenagers stranded with their robot minder and able to transform themselves into the bodies of mice when it suits their purpose. They make contact with a couple of city children staying at their aunt and uncle's farm and the four of them work together, with the help of local cafe owner and rally driver Gladys and her nerdy son Norman, to keep the space travellers safe from their pursuers, the evil Sentinels, while they try to repair their ship so they can rejoin their parents. Palmer chose the West Coast setting not only for its dramatic scenery and geographical isolation, allowing him to create a small rural town with a three-teacher school and an old-fashioned school bus, but for its technological isolation: there is no cellphone coverage, so the characters are forced to rely on their own resources. He was also keen to provide a New Zealand setting because one of the frustrations of his own young reading was "... that all the exciting stuff seemed to happen in other countries ... never anywhere at home."¹⁷⁷ There is a sense of unexplored mystery about South Westland that lends itself well to science fiction and the 'ghost town' element is also a factor: to the sophisticated Auckland schoolchildren, Rata Area School with its limited facilities seems trapped in a time warp somewhere around the 1980s, but the town's characters are eccentric, tolerant and surprisingly resourceful, reflecting the perception the evil aliens have of the 'special' human race which unlike any other life form was able to evolve from steam power to nuclear power in less than two centuries. Palmer is working on a sequel, also set on the Coast.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Geoff Palmer, email 29 Sept 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Geoff Palmer, email 29 Sept 2011.

MAJOR THEMES IN COAST WRITING

The bibliography has detailed 180 works of imaginative writing, 73 of which are in verse form. In this next section I will consider the West Coast landscape and its four major physical resources – greenstone, gold, coal and timber – and the way in which each has influenced the literature.

Dealing with the landscape

*“A gauge to measure the unknown/– Lake, mountain, tree,” Denis Glover*¹⁷⁹

After the early navigators, it was sealers and whalers who first described the Coast to the outside world: New Zealand’s first exports were 4,500 sealskins shipped from Dusky Sound to China in 1773 and forty years later the first recorded West Coast yarn was told in Australia. Like all good West Coast yarns, it is based on a true story, that of sealer David Lowrieston and his party, who were rescued from South Westland with their haul of 14,000 skins and 5 tonnes of sea elephant oil after being stranded for more than two years when their ship, the brig *Active*, disappeared at sea after dropping them off for the season. The men were returned to Sydney on the schooner *Governor Bligh* in December 1813 and the circulation of the story on the waterfront would have been dramatic and immediate. The folk song ‘Davy Lowston’, the oldest known New Zealand story in English, originated on the Sydney waterfront in early 1814, had a wide currency throughout the Pacific and was not identified as ‘national’ until the 1950s. Historian Robert McNab later questioned the locality, given in the song as Open Bay Island off Jackson Bay, and looked unsuccessfully for notes or documents, corroborating folk historian Frank Fyfe’s theory that “about 1814 some old lag in the Rocks area of old Sydney town, with an ear for a good tale and an eye out for possible free drinks...”¹⁸⁰ first sang ‘David Lowrieston’ to the widely-known tune of ‘Samuel Hall’/‘Captain Kidd’. The song has undergone various syncopatic changes to the actual story: in contemporary versions the names and dates are subtly altered, the fourteen thousand skins are changed to ten and there is an implication, for dramatic effect

¹⁷⁹ Denis Glover, ‘Lake, Mountain, Tree,’ *Sings Harry*, Christchurch, The Caxton Press, 1951, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Frank Fyfe, ‘Pre-Colonial Song: David Lowston,’ *Maoriland: Journal of the New Zealand Folklore Society*, Spring 1970, 29.

and historically untrue, that some men died. It is a cautionary tale nevertheless, recording the inhospitable environment and urging its audience to “never seal”. Shore whaling stations and sealing camps were sparse on the Coast and generally supposed to be pre-colonial.¹⁸¹ The “Brackish water, putrid seal” of the folksong rings true but although the interaction between Maori and pre-colonial European was intermittent and sometimes uncomfortable¹⁸² (a short story by Keri Hulme tells of a Maori warrior imprisoned in a cask by angry whalers¹⁸³), there is no evidence that the plight of stranded Westland sealers who became ‘Pakeha Maori’ in the novels of Gilbert Rock, Graeme Sturgeon and Phil Smith was based on Coast history.

A more academic nineteenth century audience received the same bleak impression of the Coast, described from the sea as “One long solitude with a forbidding sky and impenetrable forest,”¹⁸⁴ “unfit for man or domestic beasts”¹⁸⁵; in the 1830s Joel Polack described it from the sea as “desolate and repulsive in the extreme”.¹⁸⁶ Such descriptions were not only influenced by the varied experience of the writers, who measured the Coast against Europe (the Old World) or the South Pacific (tropical Eden) landscapes, but also by the economic or political contexts of their exploration as colonisers: here were no familiar and friendly domestic landscapes, no obvious tracts of fertile land waiting to be tamed, subdued and pastoralised, no sheltering harbours, indigenous communities or resources of food. The dense and uncompromising forests stood dark against snow-covered mountains and the landscape, acoustically as well as aesthetically unfamiliar, sublime rather than beautiful according to Edmund Burke’s definition, excited emotions of self-preservation, awe and horror. Coast writers use the language of the battlefields: “they crush him to the cruel hill!”¹⁸⁷; a glacier is “like a barrier of glittering swords”¹⁸⁸; the river “severs/a house

¹⁸¹ The last sealing season was in 1946

¹⁸² Thomas Brunner, *The Great Journey: An Expedition to Explore the Interior of the Middle Island, New Zealand, 1846-8*, Christchurch: Pegasus, 1952, 46, noted strife between sealers and Maori at Tauranga, near Kawatiri, with killings on both sides.

¹⁸³ Hulme, ‘Hatchings,’ *Stonefish*, 130.

¹⁸⁴ Unnamed French explorer, 1926, in Paul Shepard, ‘English Reaction to the New Zealand Landscape before 1850,’ *Pacific Viewpoint Monograph No 4 Department of Geography, Victoria University of Wellington* (1969), 7.

¹⁸⁵ Hursthouse, Vol I, p224, quoted in Shepard, 21.

¹⁸⁶ J S Polack, *New Zealand: being a Narrative of Travels and Adventure during a Residence in that Country between the years 1831 and 1837*, Capper Press, Christchurch, 1974, Vol I, 72.

¹⁸⁷ O’Regan, ‘The Slaying of the King’ in *Poems. Sonnets, Occasional Pieces*, 25.

¹⁸⁸ Elsie K Morton, *A Trumper in South Westland*, Auckland: J E Jenkins & Co, 1951, 16. .

from the road”¹⁸⁹, although Scotsman Rev John McFarlane, arriving in 1840 on the *Bengal Merchant*, wrote a rare glowing report of “Alpine height upon alpine height”¹⁹⁰ and Samuel Butler most notably viewed the Southern Alps in terms of ‘The Sublime’ which also “made possible the aesthetic enjoyment of mountain scenery”¹⁹¹ (Butler and Coral Atkinson both draw comparisons with northern Italy). In this context, the Coast was also ‘scenic,’ and the 1890s postcards of Hokitika-based photographers Muir and Moodie cemented its early reputation for outstanding tourist values; a century later the photographer in *The Love Apple* tames the landscape until the Alps are “like well-rinsed porcelain”¹⁹².

Such descriptions illustrate the shifting of frameworks; navigators and surveyors such as Cook, Heaphy and Rochester described the Coast in terms of what they were looking for and, with the notable exception of Thomas Brunner, who engaged objectively with the population, their descriptions were couched solely in terms of economic and political expectations. As a result, the Coast got a uniformly bad press, but by the 1880s interest had turned to the physical descriptions of articulate memoirists like Money¹⁹³, Preshaw¹⁹⁴ and Reuben Waite¹⁹⁵, whose focus was necessarily on the dangers of river crossings and the traverse of steep bluffs. The first West Coast travel guide, *Rambles on the Golden Coast of the South Island of New Zealand*,¹⁹⁶ written and printed in Hokitika in 1884 by the son of the *West Coast Times* editor and reprinted in London two years later, includes sketches of fish, ferns and scenery and asserts that “the West Coast will become a recognised stage in the grand tour”.¹⁹⁷ The forest and bush landscapes closer to the sea have a density more effectively painted than photographed, more fruitfully examined in detail, and such appreciation came later; in 1925 Blanche Baughan concentrates her travel

¹⁸⁹ Eggleston, ‘Come up this Valley,’ *25 Poems*, 24.

¹⁹⁰ John McFarlane in C K and M M Brown, *It Happened on the West Coast, The History of St John’s Presbyterian Church 1865-70 – 1970*, St John’s Presbyterian Church, Greymouth, c1970, 5.

¹⁹¹ Shepard, *English Reaction to the New Zealand Landscape*, 9.

¹⁹² Atkinson, *Love Apple*, 222.

¹⁹³ Charles L Money, *Knocking About in New Zealand*, Melbourne: S. Mullen, 1871.

¹⁹⁴ George Preshaw, *Banking under Difficulties, or Life on the Goldfields of Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand*, Sydney: Edwards, Dunlop & Co, 1888.

¹⁹⁵ W H L Leech (ed), *A Narrative of the Discovery of the West Coast Goldfields, by Reuben Waite*, Nelson: J Hounsell, 1869.

¹⁹⁶ R C Reid, *Rambles on the Golden Coast of the South Island of New Zealand*, 1st ed. Hokitika, Reid & Co (Printers and Publishers, West Coast Times), 1884. Reprinted 1886 The Colonial Printing and Publishing Company Ltd, London, 1886.

¹⁹⁷ Reid 5.

guide on the minutiae of mountain flowers and ferns; artist Toss Woollaston, who moved to Greymouth in 1949, says, “The bush landscape mops up pure colours almost without any white – it’s like a loud-toned deep bell, you strike it and there are endless vibrations without a sharp – but that’s the poetry of it.”¹⁹⁸

Social interaction with the landscape has been sombre; the plight of the stranded sealers, the deprivations of Brunner and his party and the ill-fated Shetlanders of the Heaphy River settlement of the 1850s point up the physical isolation of the Coast and the difficulties of overland travel which were emphasised in the next few decades when the gold rush occurred. Ethnicity was eclectic: Maori, Irish, British, Italian, Shetlanders, Chinese and Jews came from the North Island, Australia and America; although there were occasional small communities in South Westland that attempted to transplant and preserve their own religious and cultural mores, such as the Germans in Jackson Bay¹⁹⁹, the Shetlanders at Karamea and the Italians at Bruce Bay, the government settlements were contrived and ill-conceived and the physical challenges of the land defeated them. Both Graeme Lay (*Alice and Luigi*) and Vonnice Alexander (*Echoes of my Sisters*) explore the social and cultural implications of the South Westland settlements in their historical novels, emphasising the impossibility of applying agricultural skills learned in Ireland and Italy to the cold, dense rainforests of Jackson Bay and Bruce Bay and, more significantly, the burden of cultural continuity; Liam O’Sullivan asks “Here in this empty place, what stories would he tell his sons? The old ones would have to do.”²⁰⁰

Conventional pioneer settlement, with its emphasis on ‘taming’ the land into pastoral production, had little relevance to the Coast, where productivity came through exploitation, progressively, of gold, coal and timber. These were industries which significantly diminished the aesthetic values of their immediate environs, giving rise to the ‘rape of the land’ motif in poetry and some fiction. Goldmining involved noisy machinery, broken bush, disrupted waterways, piles of mud and rock. At Ross four decades after the main rush, “In all directions the hills were gashed and rent by the power of the sluicing

¹⁹⁸ Toss Woollaston and Jill Trevelyan. *Toss Woollaston: A Life in Letters*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004, 177.

¹⁹⁹ Jennifer Mary Curtis, *The Special Settlements of Jackson’s Bay and Karamea*. MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1973.

²⁰⁰ Alexander, *Echoes of My Sisters*, 9.

hose. Here and there, amid blackened stumps, some forest giant still green held up protesting arms and as I viewed these things, I sorrowed for the passing of the Forest.”²⁰¹ At Kaniere in 1901, “Like lepers, sad, forsaken of their kind,/ The pine trees’ naked trunks/ Arise – and from the stagnant/ Swamp behind,/ Bereft and bare of branches,/ Reach up their withered stumps.”²⁰² In Charlotte Randall’s Hokitika of 1865, “This bush is all chopped up”²⁰³. There is a basic dichotomy between the natural beauty of landscape and the ugly, dirty reality of extractive industries like mining; the obvious metaphors are mining shafts and coal smoke. J M Ewen in *Far From The Sun* uses colour to set the scene, contrasting clear blue sky with billowing grey smoke, describing red rata, yellow kowhai, dark green hills, a white rooster, then the main protagonist whose “rosy cheeks were not yet pale and hardened...” entering the dark blackness underground.²⁰⁴ Bill Pearson has a childhood memory of his mother warning him to watch out for old miners’ shafts; “I was awed, partly at the prospect of disappearing...twelve feet into the earth, but as well at the blandness with which a responsible adult could tolerate the continuance of such dangers,”²⁰⁵ and discusses the middle class concept of a universe where there are no shafts for boys to fall into. More recently, Buller poet Leicester Kyle²⁰⁶ likens an abandoned coal mine to “a repository of old ideas” but links the natural regeneration of plant and bird life to a new appreciation of “the world’s bright edge/with all the best views”, signalling that in this new century the period of mourning for a damaged landscape is over and “there’s somewhere else to go.”

In 1952 Pearson wrote that we still had not made friends with the land, that “we sneer at our own countryside: we think it effeminate to admire it”²⁰⁷; his comment reflects his own social and literary frustrations rather than the attitudes of previously-published South Island poets such as O’Regan, Ridge, Baughan and Glover. The ‘landscape convention’ in art and literature explored by Ian Wedde in 1985 is about allegory and

²⁰¹ A Maude Moreland, *Through South Westland*, London: Wetherly & Co, 1911, 21.

²⁰² Lola Ridge, ‘A Deserted Diggings, Maoriland’, *The Bulletin*, 5 October, 1901.

²⁰³ Randall, *Hokitika Town*, 5.

²⁰⁴ Ewen, *Far From the Sun*, 7.

²⁰⁵ Bill Pearson, *Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays*, London ; Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974, 2.

²⁰⁶ Kyle, *The Great Buller Coal Plateaux*, 4.

²⁰⁷ Pearson, *Fretful Sleepers*, 28.

symbolism, at best utopian and at worst verging on mimicry²⁰⁸ but, with the exception of Pearson and Mervyn Thompson, the Coast's writers and in particular its poets do appear to have made friends with the land and to admire it without measuring it in conventionally-understood motifs and codes. There are exceptions, of course; Butler and Hulme both build versions of "that romantic cliché"²⁰⁹, the Aeolian harp, and there were 'stag at bay' etched glass front doors at Blackball, too, but validated by living stags and hinds in the close-pressed bush.

The spiritual dimension in West Coast landscape was suggested by Monte Holcroft in 1940 when he reflected on the primeval influence of ancient forests on the mental attitudes and religious beliefs of the first English and Scots settlers who exposed themselves to "deep contacts". "Here, if anywhere, are to be found the conditions of a spiritual outlook, the origins of a religious temper ..."²¹⁰ For Wardon, Butler, Hulme, Hooper and Orwin, it is a dark and very real spirit world in which humans must strive to retain their sanity. Understatement, an identifiable device in Coast literature and vernacular particularly evident in Crump, Hawes, Grant and the 'tall tales' genre of Hindmarsh, Hobbs and others, is not only a response to the rugged grandeur of the landscape but also to this underlying dark spirituality; both factors contribute to the sense of intellectual freedom explored by O'Regan, Hulme and the 'man alone' writers. In *Erewhon*, Butler hints at the exploitation of the Coast in his character's determination to enter this unknown world and 'grasp at the possible profits'²¹¹; but he also experiences disorientation: "that dreadful doubt as to my own identity ... the intense silence and gloom of this rocky wilderness were too much for me"²¹². That theme is picked up by Peter Hooper: "The land was tremendous,/took him by the throat,/hollowed him"²¹³. Paradoxically, the sublime landscape which "made possible the aesthetic enjoyment of mountain scenery"²¹⁴ also influences the development of the spiritual element which is one of the most recognisable

²⁰⁸ Ian Wedde, 'Fleeing the Centre' in Phillips, Jock, *Te Whenua Te Iwi*. Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1987.

²⁰⁹ Mark Williams, 'Keri Hulme and the Negative Capability,' *Leaving the Highway: Six Contemporary New Zealand Novelists*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990, 93.

²¹⁰ Holcroft, *Deepening Stream*, 27.

²¹¹ Butler, *Erewhon*, 28.

²¹² Butler, *Erewhon*, 41

²¹³ Hooper, 'To the Forest', *Journey Towards an Elegy* 37.

²¹⁴ Shepard 9.

strands of West Coast fiction; as in Rangi Faith's evocative title, 'The spirit of greenstone and the Dutch school of painting meet in the Otira Gorge'.²¹⁵ The reference is to artist Petrus van der Velden's 'Otira Gorge' series of chiaroscuro landscapes which are wild, stormy and brooding; Blanche Baughan's "darkling gorge" is only partly mitigated by its "rare sudden smiles of sunshine"²¹⁶ while Thomas Cottle, caught in a storm at Otira in 1890, writes "There was something unutterably grand – something which sent a thrill of mad delight through every nerve"²¹⁷.

On the Coast, the forests meet the sea with little in between, and both are powerful and defining forces; Glover writes "At one flank old Tasman, the boar,/Slashes and tears..."²¹⁸ Words like 'tranquillity', 'peace' and 'harmony' do not feature here, nor do growing, building or nurturing; here it is man against the elements. It is steep, mountainous and wet, or, as Ngaio Marsh more politely put it, "always possessed by the voice of the river, the shadow of mountains and the smell of wet bush,"²¹⁹ and it is physically separated from the rest of the country by the stupendous barrier of the Southern Alps. Butler was the first novelist to pick up on that, using the phrase 'Over the Range'; a climber and explorer, he described the "ridge behind ridge, outline behind outline, sunlight behind shadow, and shadow behind sunlight..."²²⁰ setting the scene for his very different land of inverted values where immorality and lawbreaking are viewed sympathetically but physical weakness is punished. Butler, Chapman and Hawes all use the same device of escape by air, with a hot air balloon or kite, to point up the otherworldly nature of their settings, and in *The Dream of Nikau Jam* Hawes inverts the metaphor with intrusive and judgemental outsiders who are astronomers. Every film in the bibliography which forms part of this thesis begins with the landscape and many of the novels begin with the view from the sea or through one of "the four great gateways which lead into this land"²²¹ (although there were eight known Maori trails only four were developed as roadways); over the austere Haast from Central Otago, through the dramatic chasm of the Otira Gorge, over the forested

²¹⁵ Faith, *Conversation with a moa hunter*, 47.

²¹⁶ B E Baughan, *Arthur's Pass and the Otira Gorge*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1925, 66

²¹⁷ Thomas Cottle, 'In the Otira Gorge', *Zealandia*, 1 May 1890, 656.

²¹⁸ Glover, Denis, *Sings Harry, & Other Poems*, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1957, 10.

²¹⁹ Ngaio Marsh, *Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography*, London: Collins, 1966, 108.

²²⁰ Butler, *Erewhon*, 51.

²²¹ Peter Hooper, 'Poet in a Rejected Landscape,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/035.

Lewis Pass or through the winding rock faces of the Buller Gorge. Each entry point is different but definitive, Hooper says. “There’s a change in the quality of the light, which means a change in the quality of one’s own responses, of one’s own mind, and I think there’s an immediate lowering of a psychic threshold.”²²² Toss Woollaston wrote that “the Buller Gorge is meant to frighten you and succeeds – your thigh muscles grip and ungrip...”²²³

Holcroft speaks about the primeval shadow, “the sinister quality of the great rainforest ... of Westland...”²²⁴ He says there is no sense of older human history there, that the forest reveals itself as something that has never belonged even to the Maori and, speaking more generally of New Zealand, that “the empty places lead us straight towards the unknown”²²⁵. By extension, Westland is the home of dark spirits. Some, like the old man under the rata tree in *McPherson’s Gully*,²²⁶ are benevolent, others take the role of kaitiaki or guardians, and the land itself is often animate as in Lola Ridge’s “laughing lake, which ... has coiled herself to sleep,”²²⁷ and “Mother Forest” on whose spacious lap “sleepy shadows gather low”²²⁸; in Ngaio Marsh’s mantled hills which in the late afternoon light “...are now articulate. Their bones show through the forest...”²²⁹ Keri Hulme is even more definitive about the female nature of the land, which, for her, is never in doubt; not only in terms of Papatuanuku the earth mother but in its physical shapes and forms; for Hulme, the deep recesses of South Westland are the top of the country, Cape Reinga the bottom: in Greymouth in 1982 she wrote “I think, I think, I think I will leave this barren north and go south to the top of the world.”²³⁰ Errol Brathwaite is playful in referring to “the stony toes of the great Southern Alps” as he explains the legend that the South Island was formed by the sunken canoe of Rangi the sky father’s four sons. According to Maori, the West Coast needed further modification to be habitable, so one of the brothers sat down

²²² Peter Hooper, ‘Poet in a Rejected Landscape’ 2, (later published in abridged form as ‘Earth Light’ in *Earth Marriage*).

²²³ Woollaston 169.

²²⁴ Holcroft, *Deepening Stream* 23.

²²⁵ Holcroft, *Deepening Stream* 23.

²²⁶ Wardon 37.

²²⁷ Lola Ridge, ‘Lake Kaniere’, *NZ Illustrated Magazine*, November 1902.

²²⁸ Ridge, ‘A Deserted Diggings.’

²²⁹ Marsh 109.

²³⁰ Hulme, Keri, ‘Getting to the Coast,’ *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1982, 48.

on the Paparoa Range and flattened out the Grey River valley, giving it the name Te Mawheratangi-o-nga-Kuwaha-o-Tu-te-Rangi-Whanoa, the Extension Made by the Thighs of Tu-te-Rangi-Whanoa. The West Coast was special to Maori, Brathwaite says: “ ... there was a wildness about its seascapes that disturbed him and played upon his imagination”.²³¹

Tuhuru Tainui’s account of West Coast history, written for the Westland Centennial in May 1960²³², is based on the oral traditions of Poutini Ngai Tahu. The author is a direct descendant of Ngai Tahu chief Tuhuru Kokare, one of the raiders from the east coast who swept Ngati Wairangi from power in the early 1800s and whose son Wereta Taunui signed the 1864 deed of sale with James Mackay. Although history written by the victors is always problematic, Tainui’s lineage and therefore his oral history are intertwined with that of Waitaha, Ngati Wairangi, Ngati Mamoe and other Poutini Ngai Tahu iwi. “My noble ancestors did not write,” Tainui asserts. “They handed down their knowledge through their carvings, haka and action songs – from father to son. I have compiled the booklet from information received in this way.”²³³ He describes Coast Maori in the early nineteenth century as a tall, virile people with a distinctive culture and well-ordered social system, whose first visit to New Zealand in the tenth century had been one of exploration while the second and third, around 1200AD and 1350AD, had resulted in colonisation, with Maori adapting to the environment and resources of their new country.

Barry Brailsford²³⁴ tells the Waitaha legend that Ngahue the navigator and his companion Poutini sailed from Easter Island in search of ‘the stone of the gods’ and found it in the West Coast rivers; Poutini later returned to settle on the north bank of the Mawhera River. Coast historian and tribal elder Paul Madgwick spells out the Maori occupation of the Coast more specifically, beginning with the legend of Maui’s landfall at Bruce Bay in the waka *Mahunui* which had brought him from Hawaiki, and explaining the connections between Waitaha, who arrived around 800 AD, and subsequent invaders from the north.²³⁵ The main sources are clear on the key point; the Coast became a battlefield from the mid-

²³¹ Errol Brathwaite, *The companion guide to Westland*, Auckland: Collins, 1981, 10.

²³² Tuhuru Tainui. *Kai Konohi*, Arahura: W E Richards & Son Ltd, 1960. Located in Hocken; Peter Hooper literary papers MS 2601/138.

²³³ Tuhuru 2.

²³⁴ Barry Brailsford, *The Tattooed Land: The Southern Frontiers of the Pa Maori*, Wellington: Reed, 1981, 190.

²³⁵ Paul Madgwick, *Aotea: A history of South Westland Maori*, Greymouth: *Greymouth Evening Star*, 1992.

1700s when a woman named Raureka crossed to the East Coast from the head of the Arahura River and showed Ngai Tahu a piece of greenstone. The social consequence was that the Maori population of the Coast became sparse, fragmented and somewhat nomadic, boosted by outsiders and lacking continuity of hapu and whanau, and by 1847 tribal warfare associated with the greenstone industry had already shaped and changed the culture of the Coast. Explorer Thomas Brunner found the few Maori living on the Coast were physically and socially mobile, with evidence of regular communication between the Coast, Massacre Bay and Nelson Maori; the area north of Kawatiri (Buller) was part of Taitapu under Noho's control, while the southern Coast was Poutini Ngai Tahu by right of conquest, and while there was some reluctance to cross the divide to the east coast there was a flourishing greenstone trade. Brunner noted European influences; whare at Mawhera had chimneys and raised sleeping platforms reminiscent of whalers' huts in the Marlborough Sounds, and although there had never been a European missionary on the Coast he found the few Maori living in the region practised Wesleyan and Church of England Christian worship to the point of having churches, schools and interdenominational feuds.²³⁶ Twenty years later, Maori goldminers were part of a culturally diverse and equally mobile gold rush population including Europeans, Asians and Americans, but there was little tribal continuity; when Te Tauraka Waka a Māui marae was opened by Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio at Bruce Bay in 2005, elders claimed it was the first marae in the region for 140 years.²³⁷

Pounamu: the mauri

“and poenemu\ (just to own/ I loved, and lived,/ And loved the stone).” - Keri Hulme²³⁸

Maori legends relating to pounamu (pounemu/poenemu in South Island dialect) vary in their detail and most were collected and retold by Pakeha anthropologists and historians, but their common base is that an ancestor (in some versions a mythological being in the form of a fish) is turned to stone in the Arahura River, thus investing the greenstone with spiritual power and value. Greenstone was taken and traded all over New Zealand as a raw

²³⁶ Brunner, *The Great Journey* 55.

²³⁷ Te Tauraka Waka a Māui marae, www.makaawhio.maori.nz/maraehistory.html, viewed 23 February 2012

²³⁸ Hulme, 'Saying Nothing/In the End (Lines to be put on a gravestone),' *Strands* 65.

material for tools and ornaments, and the Maori name for the West Coast, Te Tai Poutini, derives from these legends. Captain Cook was confused by Maori who showed him greenstone and told him that it was a fish; the legend is that Poutini was a great green fish that came from Hawaiki with a man called Ngahue, as companion or pursuer according to different versions of the story, and was turned to stone in the Arahura River. Another myth is that two runaway wives were drowned at the mouth of the river and with their canoe were turned to greenstone. The literary consequence is that pounamu, the greenstone which in all its varieties was the Coast's first extractive industry and trading commodity, has been for most writers a stand-alone symbol of spirituality associated with specific geographical features but unhampered by iwi associations.

"Why God selected the West Coast of the South Island to be the only place in the world where greenstone is to be found, He alone knows," Tahuru Tainui comments in *Kai Kanohi* before recounting his own tribal legend of how Poutine quarrelled with her people in the Bay of Plenty and came south in her canoe, travelling up the Ahaura River to eventually capsize and drown. Her brother Tama came looking for her, throwing his teka (dart) and following it to find traces of the party in various types of greenstone up and down the Coast. Finally, he found the place, in a deep pool at the foot of a waterfall, where Poutine's canoe had capsized and where there was a large greenstone boulder called 'Kai Kanohi' (food for the eyes).²³⁹ Briar Grace-Smith in *Potiki's Memory of Stone* retells the legend as a story of human sacrifice; Noanoa was sacrificed to the river and turned to kokopu pounamu, a particular red-flecked greenstone. Potiki's father Manaaki took him to the river and told him the story when he was four, but it is later revealed that Manaaki tried to sacrifice his son to Noanoa in return for a valuable boulder; the payback comes when his daughter is drowned, reinforcing the spiritual power of the pounamu. Phil Smith in *The Unknown Zone* references the Ngai Tahu raids and the subsequent flight of Ngati Wairangi to the North Island with the greenstone pendant Moanawhakamana, which becomes a symbol of strength and survival for their descendants, as do the two greenstone pendants Lafe Erickson recovers from the sacked village after his first wife and her family, resettled at Aorere in Golden Bay after fleeing from Ngai Tahu at Okarito, are massacred by Ngati

²³⁹ In 1827 Tuhuru was captured by Ngati Rarua at his pa at Mawhera and taken to Paturau, at the northern end of the Coast, where he lived for some years before he was ransomed by his sister (in other versions wife or daughter) who gave the mere 'Kai Kanohi' in exchange for his safe return to Mawhera.

Rarua raiders in Graeme Sturgeon's *Beneath the Southern Cross*. This cultural awareness of pounamu in Coast literature post-dates the Maori renaissance of the 1970s and is in line with national trends; in Ruth Northcroft's very English fairy story of 1947, *Winks in Westland*, a piece of greenstone rather than a bottle, shell or other artefact serves merely as a localised Aladdin's lamp, but 40 years later, in *Watcher in the Forest*, Joanna Orwin invokes the pounamu legend of fish turned to stone and sets up an Arthurian quest, the righting of an ancient wrong by returning a piece of pounamu to its rightful place.

The concept of pounamu as an organic, living spirit has been largely neglected in the literature until modern writers like Grace-Smith, whose Noanoa (the name itself significant, indicating freedom from the restrictions of ritual and tapu) has a malevolent and revengeful role, and Pat White, who speaks of " ... secrets ground from clouds green/within stone."²⁴⁰ Keri Hulme's kaumatua, the keeper of the mauri in *The Bone People*, recalls Tama's quest when he uses twigs as darts to find Joe who is to be the next keeper; the drowned stone he watches over is the spirit of the land, echoing the legend of pounamu taken to Hawaiki by Poutini the taniwha, then returned on Maui's great voyaging canoe.²⁴¹ In 'The Eyes of the Moonfish',²⁴² a greenstone tiki is a mother's spirit, and in 'Telling How the Stonefish Swims' Hulme refers again to Poutini as "greenstone guardian", moving past "lucent stones, tools and jewels/that the olds insisted were fish at first" to suggest a brooding grief and a desire for utu.²⁴³

In the historical novels of the last two decades only British writer Rose Tremain sees greenstone as a metaphor for identity and belonging: Kaye Kelly uses it to identify and give status to her Maori characters; Carol Thomas denigrates it as a symbol for Maori greed; Patrick and others ignore it, a position in keeping with the social and cultural environments of their novels; and the contemporary fiction of Barry Crump and Des Hunt references the financial value of the stone. It falls to the poets, notably Holman, White and Hulme, to admire, appreciate and reflect on the intrinsic beauty and spiritual values of the Coast's pounamu. Ironically, artist Theo Schoon, who lived and worked in Hokitika in 1970, found there was a lively trade smuggling West Coast jade out to Japanese fishing

²⁴⁰ White, 'Bookends', *Bushfall*, 11.

²⁴¹ Hulme, *The Bone People*, 364.

²⁴² Hulme, *Stonefish* 321.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

trawlers.²⁴⁴ He felt that Coasters were their own worst enemies when it came to realising the commercial value of their asset, and contrasted them with Japanese and Chinese jade carvers and poets who traditionally composed fanciful names and histories for their jade to keep the prices up, commenting that, “At the high prices being asked overseas, poetic talents might have sprouted by the dozen in Westland, and a lot of very useable jade may have been saved.”²⁴⁵ Beautiful boulders were cut into unnecessarily small blocks, commercial carvers were undervalued, and there was no acceptance of the need to spend time designing their work, Schoon found, and when the New Zealand Design Council tried to introduce the idea of design as an art worth paying for there was “little comprehension” on the Coast. Within the next two decades, however, Westland greenstone carver Bill Mathieson, who died in the 1970s, was acknowledged by his contemporaries in four different poetry collections²⁴⁶, Holman most evocatively describing “story creatures:/they come to me from the rivers/where tall jade boulders tumble/and crack ...”²⁴⁷

The Wild West Coast: goldmining

“Cheer boys cheer, a stunning goldfield’s started.” – Charles Thatcher, 1865²⁴⁸

“Ahh me father he was orange and me mother she was green,” sings Kerewin Holmes in the first few pages of *The Bone People*.²⁴⁹ It’s no coincidence that she is poking around the rock pools of a West Coast beach at the time and that her early morning musings are a “playful, pleasurable ranging across the possibilities of the English language”²⁵⁰ which underscore her character’s cultural complexity; the Protestant/Catholic conflict highlighted in her Irish folksong points up the larger cultural ‘mix-up’ in the best-known and most widely analysed of all West Coast novels. Kerewin is mostly Pakeha, partly Celtic, arguably eccentric and amiably classless, characteristics attributed by a number of modern writers to the West Coast digger of the nineteenth century. Like Hulme’s Simon and

²⁴⁴ Theo Schoon, *Jade Country*, Sydney: Jade Arts, 1973, 46.

²⁴⁵ Schoon 64.

²⁴⁶ Ewer (ed), *Coast Voices*; Davison, *Coastlines*; Holman, *Flood Damage, As Big as a Father*.

²⁴⁷ Holman, ‘Story Creatures (for Bill Mathieson),’ *Flood Damage* 18.

²⁴⁸ Garland, *The Singing Kiwi*, 66.

²⁴⁹ Hulme, *The Bone People*, 13.

²⁵⁰ Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 89.

Patrick's Rose, many characters in Coast fiction are stateless strangers; *Denniston Rose*, *Fool's Gold*, *West Coast Reins*, *The Cost of Courage*, *Coal Flat*, *Devil's Apple*, *The Dream of Nikau Jam*, *Copper Top*, *Mecca's Gold* and *Hokitika Town* all feature individuals making fresh starts in new territory, and *The Love Apple* reverses the motif by using the Coast as an empty canvas for people from different backgrounds to meet on.

It was goldmining, the second extractive industry on the Coast, that built its nineteenth century population and independent attitudes. Historian Philip Ross May identified the goldfields generation who moved from California to British Columbia, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand, transferring not only their ambitions, experience, societal mores and democracy to each new place but also their oral and written literature. Pacific man had no country but the goldfields, national identity had not yet been invented and the West Coast goldfields soon took on their own cultural identity, different from the Yukon, Victoria or Central Otago but having much more in common with each of these regions than with the pastoral settler communities of Sydney or Canterbury. Goldminer turned actor and playwright George Darrell felt culturally isolated in 1877 when he wrote that, "Rearward of all, the dividing range of mountains loomed drearily, a barrier as 'twere between us and the civilised world,"²⁵¹ but his appears to have been a less common voice. There were many natural advantages that recommended the West Coast goldfields to the Australian diggers. It was easy and inexpensive to get to, it had a temperate climate and its rainfall, especially in the Hokitika district, "was all that could be desired by the alluvial miner ... "²⁵²; in 1865 it rained for 300 days out of 365. Beach leads from Okarito to Westport were easy to exploit and generally very rich, travel along the natural highway of the beach was perceived to be pleasant and healthy (although Blackball-born Stevan Eldred-Grigg points out that the rivers and beaches also ran with raw effluent²⁵³), and an infrastructure of transport, supplies and entertainment was quickly established.

Historian Bernard Conradson notes that the provincial seal of the Westland County Council, the first local authority on the Coast, carried the legend *Et mea messis erit* – 'and

²⁵¹ Irwin, 10, referencing 'Off Colour' in *Hash: A mixed dish for Christmas*, ed Garnet Walch. (Melbourne, P E Reynolds, 1877), also 'Zealandia – Midnight Memories!', *Australasia: an intercolonial Christmas Annual* (ed Garnet Walch Melbourne: G E Robertson, 1878).

²⁵² Waratah 37.

²⁵³ Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Diggers, Hatters, Whores: The Story of New Zealand Gold Rushes*, Auckland: Random House, 2008, 300.

my harvest is yet to come', and asks "Was it motto, prophecy or epitaph?"²⁵⁴ The West Coast was never a unified political entity; geography, provincialism and the nature of mining communities saw to that. It was goldfields country, and nothing could have been more foreign to the Canterbury settlers in the 1860s.

The first gold rushes were at Hokitika in Westland, which was part of Canterbury province, and in the Buller, which was part of Nelson. Access was by sea from Nelson, Dunedin or Melbourne, and, because of the harsh and unproductive nature of the land, the urgency of the goldmining industry and the difficulties of land access between settlements, everything the miners needed, from tools, building supplies and clothing to basic food and drink, was brought in by ship. By the height of the gold rush (1865-67) the port of Hokitika recorded an average of 68 arrivals per month²⁵⁵ with lesser numbers coming in to Greymouth (40 per month), Charleston, Okarito and Buller. The Australian colonies provided 99.4 percent of the Coast's overseas imports²⁵⁶; for example, the cargo on ss *Gothenburg*, arriving in Hokitika from Melbourne 1 Dec 1865, included such items as butter, onions, apples, porter, pepper, spiced beef, teas, seeds, copper, nails, paint, timber, castings, buckets, pottery, stationery, drapery and boots, all in large quantities ordered by local merchants for resale, as well as 70 passengers and the British Mail for all New Zealand ports.²⁵⁷ Although some of the miners came via Dunedin and the Otago fields, most were from Victoria in Australia (May cites 17,000 arrivals at West Coast ports from 1865-7²⁵⁸) and they brought with them the colourful red Crimea shirts and bowyangs which are still worn by the Kokatahi Band²⁵⁹ as a Coasters' uniform.

The region was politically attached to Canterbury just long enough to get the road over the Alps built and paid for, then the Coasters fought for separation. The road was built at vast expense so that Christchurch and Lyttelton merchants could take their share of the profits from the goldfields, but the project backfired; when Canterbury politicians and

²⁵⁴ Bernard Conradson, 'Politics and Penury: County and Province 1868-76', 47 in May, P. R. *Miners and Militants: politics in Westland, 1865-1918: six essays* (Christchurch: Whitcoulls/University of Canterbury, 1975).

²⁵⁵ May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 368.

²⁵⁶ May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 479.

²⁵⁷ 'Port of Hokitika,' *West Coast Times*, Issue 78, 2 December 1865, 2.

²⁵⁸ May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 478.

²⁵⁹ Westland's Kokatahi Band was formed in 1910 as a miners' band playing folk instruments such as banjo, piano accordion and fiddle; their repertoire is largely the music of the goldfields.

bankers organised a gold escort to bring Coast wealth to Christchurch it travelled empty, the miners choosing instead to send their dust and nuggets by ship to Collingwood or Melbourne as they had always done.²⁶⁰ Canterbury was left with a huge burden of debt the Coasters had neither means nor the intention to pay.²⁶¹ In terms of New Zealand politics, the West Coast was the district that nobody wanted. It was too small to be a province and lacked the necessary infrastructure, but it was too big a drain on the resources of Canterbury, so on 1 January 1868, after a special act of Parliament was passed, the area south of the Arahura River became the County of Westland. The debate in the House was memorable:

“Mr Hall: Why should Westland be part of the Province of Canterbury?

Mr Moorhouse: Why should it be a part of New Zealand?

Mr Hall: God made it part of New Zealand, but man made it part of Canterbury, and, as I believe, made a mistake in doing so.”²⁶²

Coasters have always been their own people. The diggers were not assisted immigrants but self-motivated entrepreneurs who brought with them their own laws and regulations, their own languages and cultures and their own single-minded and often desperate determination to work on their own terms for their own personal gain. They brought little with them in the way of material goods, and they seldom intended to stay. “Further, the goldfields population encompassed a wider variety of nationality than the New Zealand norm and herein lay the seeds of future discord.”²⁶³ That discord was not necessarily between races and cultures. The West Coast Irish, for example, the largest ethnic group on the goldfields, “did not choose ethnic solidarity as a means to pursue their goals and, for most, an ethnic or religious category sufficed in an environment where local communities, churches, trade unions, kinship ties and non-ethnic political parties had far

²⁶⁰ May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 404-407.

²⁶¹ Conradson, 33. The Canterbury and Westland Public Debt Act provided for arbitration to sort out the debt fairly, but it was sorted in Westland’s favour.

²⁶² NZPD 1867, vol 1 p1116. Quoted in May, Phillip, ‘Politics and Gold: the Separation of Westland’, *Miners and Militants*, 20.

²⁶³ Conradson 26.

more social relevance”²⁶⁴, while, as May points out, the Maori diggers on the Coast, many of whom had come from the Aorere fields, “took to gold digging with enthusiasm and skill” and were respected accordingly.²⁶⁵ The discord was rather between Coasters and the settler colonies of Canterbury and Nelson, which had carefully planned and controlled political and social structures based on British feudalism and land-based capitalism. Westland’s settlements were individual, impermanent and focussed on a much more rapid and direct exploitation of the land than their farming neighbours.

By 1867 the main gold rush was over, the County of Westland was running its own affairs and West Coast politics were focussed on factionalism; merchants against miners, town against town (especially Greymouth and Hokitika which commanded the two main ports on the Coast and vied for public works and economic dominance) and personality against personality (positions in national or local politics were financially rewarding and some milked the system shamelessly). The facts give rise to the legends: when bankrupt gold rush auctioneer Richard Reeves was elected to the Westland County Council in 1869 his success was described as a triumph for “mobocracy”²⁶⁶ and within months the council cheques started to bounce. The county secretary attempted to leave, was apprehended after a dramatic boat chase on the Hokitika River and was imprisoned for embezzlement. The government stepped in and passed the County of Westland Amendment Act 1869, which limited spending and overdraft options, and “again the county was paying the price for its economic distinctiveness.”²⁶⁷

Some miners in the north of Westland tried to become formally annexed to Nelson, another group from Hokitika tried to get Otago to adopt them but the financial burden they carried was too great. The problem was always Westland’s poor economic base which, because of the lack of useable land and the exploitation of mineral resources which was the sole industry, depended on customs revenue rather land rates. In 1873 Premier Julius Vogel, a former journalist and entrepreneur from the Victorian goldfields, introduced legislation which saved the county from bankruptcy a second time.²⁶⁸ It was an initiative

²⁶⁴ Lyndon Fraser, *Castles of Gold, A History of New Zealand’s West Coast Irish*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2007, 20.

²⁶⁵ May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 311.

²⁶⁶ ‘Editorial’, *West Coast Times*, Issue 1130, 6 May 1869, 2.

²⁶⁷ Conradson 37.

²⁶⁸ Province of Westland Bill 1873, Westland Loan Act 1873.

which had come from above rather than below but the feeling on the Coast was that "... change no matter of what kind is likely to prove beneficial"²⁶⁹. That year, the first section of railway on the Coast was opened to service the state coal mine at Brunner and within the decade timber exports from Hokitika reached their peak and there was a gold rush at Kumara. Regional government gave way to four counties of Buller, Inangahua, Grey and Westland, which suited each commercial hinterland and satisfied localism. Conradson notes, however, the consistent lack of stable leadership. "Goldfield politics were volatile and dominated by personalities, short-term advantage and the parochial interests which have hindered the region's development ever since."²⁷⁰

Religion was first brought to the West Coast by Maori, taught by Christian missionaries in Nelson and further afield, and by French and Irish Catholic priests in the 1860s. In 1978 a Catholic historian commented of the first mass, celebrated in a Greymouth shed in 1864, that, "Father Hallum's coming set the Catholic people into a mood from which they have not yet been released."²⁷¹ The reference, however veiled, must surely have been to that most famous of Fenian 'stouches', the 'Irish rebellion' of 1868. In that year, David McGill asserts, "a quarter of the 26,000 men of the West Coast goldfields were Irish born and 90 percent of them Catholic."²⁷² They were certainly more interested in Irish politics than local ones, according to the vitriolic war of words between Hokitika's 'green' and 'orange' newspapers, *The Celt* and *The West Coast Times*. Things came to a head on 8 March 1868 when *The Celt* co-owner Father William Larkin led a mock funeral procession of 750 men, women and children to the Hokitika cemetery to erect a Celtic cross in memory of the 'Manchester martyrs' who had recently been hanged for treason. Pro and anti-Irish Catholic feelings were further inflamed by the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh in Sydney on 12 March, and extra police were called to the Coast to deal with the expected riots on St Patrick's Day, 17 March. The Irish holiday was celebrated with little more disturbance than was usual but, amidst rising local and national nervousness, the police decided to arrest Father Larkin, writer John Manning and others over the 'mock funeral held earlier in the month. They were charged with "tumultuous

²⁶⁹ 'Editorial,' *West Coast Times*, Issue 2465, 25 August 1873, 2.

²⁷⁰ Conradson 4.

²⁷¹ Father O'Malley, *St Patrick's Church, Greymouth, 1888-1978*, Greymouth Evening Star, Greymouth, 1978, 1.

²⁷² McGill, *The Lion and the Wolfhound*, 1.

assemblage' and forcible entry to the Hokitika cemetery (they had removed nails from a gate to get in).²⁷³

The interesting aspect of the 'Fenian riots' in Hokitika, which were reported in full in the *Melbourne Age*²⁷⁴ and feature in David McGill's 2008 novel *The Mock Funeral*, is that they had little or nothing to do with New Zealand and were not indicative of any lasting unease about the Irish, certainly not among their fellow Coasters. The Irish had been on the goldfields from the start and, as Dr Lyndon Fraser points out, "on the Coast your religion was your private business. There was a strong egalitarian belief."²⁷⁵ The West Coast demonstrators were responding to political events in Ireland, England and Sydney, reported and interpreted by *The Celt* writer John Manning who, with Father Larkin, had been politically active in Victoria and whose work had previously appeared in the *Ballarat Times*, San Francisco's *Overland Monthly*, and *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*²⁷⁶: from a literary perspective, this communication interchange between Australia, the West Coast and the wider world, repeated forty years later in the coal mining industry, reinforces the idea that British colonialism stopped east of the Alps.

The egalitarian nature of West Coast social structures, which quickly became a feature of newspaper and theatrical comment, rose directly from the lack of land: the farming squire and his lady had no place west of the Southern Alps, and although 'gentility' in terms of good manners and gracious behaviour could earn respect at any level, anyone who gave him or herself airs was quickly cut down to size. The *Advertiser*, for example, reported on a legal luminary who visited the gold mining town of Charleston and asked the bailiff if there was "...any society in town that a gentleman of my position can associate with?" He was asked, "Is it societies, yer Honour? Be-gorra, there's plenty o them. There's the Hibernians, and the Oddfellows, and the Foresters...." The bewildered judge asked who his predecessor associated with after the day's court was finished, and was invited to a game of cut-throat with the bailiff and his mate.²⁷⁷ The point was more famously made by travelling music hall entertainer Charles Thatcher, who responded to a disparaging report from 'Our Own Correspondent' in the *Lyttelton Times* by getting his

²⁷³ 'Magistrate's Court : The Fenian Examinations,' *West Coast Times*, Issue 785, 30 March 1868, 2.

²⁷⁴ 'The Fenian Demonstration at Hokitika', *Melbourne Age* Tuesday March 17, 1868, 6.

²⁷⁵ Dr Lyndon Fraser, Press release, Department of Sociology, Canterbury University, May 2007.

²⁷⁶ Conradson 30.

²⁷⁷ 'The Time O' Day,' *Saturday Advertiser, NZ Review and Literary Miscellany*, 2 September 1876, 9.

audience to sing lustily with him as a chorus the accusation that they were “a noisy, dirty, drinking, smoking, cursing crowd”²⁷⁸. In fact, the song cleverly repudiates each of the charges except smoking which, it was agreed, was totally acceptable, but the chorus became popular and there was a point of pride in being rough and ready Coasters. Another popular song of Thatcher’s, ‘London and the Diggings’, emphasised the classless nature of the goldfields in broader terms: “There’s no masters here to appress [sic] a poor devil/But out in New Zealand we’re all on a level.”²⁷⁹ Something of the same tone can be discerned in poet Leicester Kyle’s remark, after he had moved from Auckland’s literary circles to ‘a bad address’ in Millerton, that “In Buller there is a great fondness for verse but little for poetry, so I stand alone and unassailed.”²⁸⁰; his viewpoint discernibly changed as he became part of the community.

Irish-born women were an even more powerful force than their menfolk, making up an estimated one third of the female population on the Coast before 1896,²⁸¹ but, contrary to popular belief, few of them arrived as bar girls or dancers. The ‘tart with a heart’, featuring in most of the historical goldfields novels no doubt did exist, and many of the bar girls married local men when their contracts ran out – as May the prostitute says in *The Love Apple*, “In this line of work you’ve got to be hopeful”, but others suffered the fate of 16-year-old Violet in Charlotte Randall’s *Hokitika Town*, or returned to Australia when the gold ran out. Most of the women on the Coast were Irish Australian who before 1860 had paid their own way to the colonies; they tended to be in their late 20s to mid-30s, many had married in Australia and most came by ship from Victoria to the Coast, either directly or via the Otago fields, with husbands, brothers or extended family members.²⁸² There was an overwhelming preponderance of men in Buller, Inangahua, Grey and Westland during the gold rushes, but more women than men in Hokitika, where domestic service was an attractive option. Women worked in the hotels and in private homes, took in washing and sewing, cooked in boarding houses and raised their families: the newspapers reflected their interests in sewing, cooking, reading, royalty, fashions and home-making (in 1876 Sarah H

²⁷⁸ Hoskins, *Goldfields Balladeer*, 167.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in McGill, *The Lion and The Wolfhound*, 13.

²⁸⁰ <http://leicesterkyle.blogspot.co.nz/search/label/Scott%20Hamilton>

²⁸¹ Fraser, *Castles of Gold*, 24.

²⁸² Fraser, *Castles of Gold*, 24.

F, a Greymouth correspondent, shared her recipe for frosting glass in window panes²⁸³). Coast women were not necessarily limited by conventional roles, however; Buller widow Jeannie Hall took over her husband's job as a travelling salesman in the 1880s, becoming the first woman in New Zealand to sell insurance and, incidentally and very effectively, obtaining signatures to the 1893 women's' suffrage petition from 87 per cent of the women in her electoral area.²⁸⁴ In much apparently male-dominated Coast fiction such as Hunter's *The Road the Men Came Home*, Crump's *Arty and the Fox* and Sturgeon's *Beneath the Southern Cross*, West Coast women are valued for their skills and companionship.

Women also predominated as hotel keepers, hardly surprising because it was one of the few businesses a woman on her own could respectably run, it utilised skills she was likely to have, and there were a lot of hotels on the Coast. It also provides a good setting for a story like *Mary Smith's Hotel*²⁸⁵, first published in Sydney in 1950 under the title *Gold in their Hearts*. In *Mary Smith's Hotel*, Lawson, like the novelists who follow him, uses a great deal of iconic West Coast material; a drowning on the Hokitika bar (Thatcher was shipwrecked on that same bar in 1865 and lived to write about it), a beautiful young widow, a kindly hotel proprietress, a fatherless boy, tender-hearted Irish bar girls, rough but generous miners (including the obligatory 'Shakespeare Joe' who quotes from the bard at every opportunity), boxing contests and the great Dick Seddon himself in a cameo appearance. The setting is Charleston in 1872, where a woman called Mary Smith did actually run the West Coast Hotel, raise a fatherless boy and earn the respect of the miners. In Lawson's novel the boy (Chris Black) was adopted by the miners and given the name 'Christopher Colombus': in real life Mary Smith's son was reputed to be the first white child born on the Waimea goldfield and was given the name 'Waimea Smith' although his legal name was Thomas Harrington Smith.²⁸⁶ Both the real and fictitious Mary Smiths were mysteriously alone in the world, both died in 1912 and were buried in the local cemetery, both were strongly independent women. "There was something fine about Mary

²⁸³ *The Saturday Advertiser, Timetable and Literary Miscellany*, 25 March 1876.

²⁸⁴ Ruby Jones et al, *Women of Westland and Their Families*, Greymouth: Westland Branch National Council of Women, 1977, 97.

²⁸⁵ Lawson, *Mary Smith's Hotel*.

²⁸⁶ Jim Smith, *About Mary Smith c1831-1912*, Tuross Head, NSW: J. Smith, 2006.

Smith,” Lawson wrote of his character. “No wonder the miners loved her and treated her as a good mate and counted it an honour to drink with her.”²⁸⁷

The real Mary Smith, called ‘Beloved and Devout’ by James McNeish in *Tavern in the Town*, was remembered as “a little old lady, very small, very pleasant” who ran the hotel herself and regularly repainted the iron walls of the building by standing on a beer barrel.²⁸⁸ It was said that ‘she never saw the Buller bridge’, a statement common to Coasters who never left their own small communities. Another Mary near Charleston is respectfully remembered in the name Dirty Mary’s Creek, a typical Coast joke because she was known to keep the neatest and cleanest home in the vicinity.

All those tales that begin, “There was an Irishman, an Englishman and a Scotsman ... ” seem to have originated on the West Coast, where the group of mates living and working together on a claim was a standard setting for goldfields stories. In the Dunedin-based *Saturday Advertiser* of 1876,²⁸⁹ regular writer Tom Rose, who also used the nom de plume ‘Mot Esor’, used such a setting for his four-part ‘Camp Yarns’ in which each member of the group in turn tells a story. The first, told in the first person by the author/narrator, who describes himself as Irish and steeped in the popular Victorian sentiment of the day, is called ‘The Greymouth Chums’²⁹⁰ and describes a devoted pair of mates who worked their own ‘Little Mary’ claim on the Grey River. Bill is older, larger and stronger and always protective of his mate Arthur, a slight young man of about 19. They are a pleasant, good-natured pair who keep to themselves, work hard and seldom drink, and when a rough miner named ‘Euchre Jack’ gives Arthur a hard time, Bill uses his fists to sort the problem out. Arthur becomes ill with consumption and is nursed devotedly by his partner until one day the mine collapses, Bill is killed and the shock of seeing his body brought home proves too much for Arthur who also dies, leading to the revelation that ‘he’ is a woman. The miners arrange for their burial in a single grave with ‘The Greymouth Chums’ written on a cross above it, and the narrator, who tidies up their affairs, discovers

²⁸⁷ Lawson, Mary Smith’s Hotel, 20.

²⁸⁸ Smith, Jim 26-27.

²⁸⁹ Published in Dunedin from 1875 by Thomas Bracken and John Bathgate, the *Saturday Advertiser, Timetable and Literary Miscellany*, whose regular contributors included B L Farjeon and James Barr (‘Gilbert Rock’), was “Established to Foster a National Spirit in New Zealand and Encourage Colonial Literature” (from masthead). It achieved a circulation of 7,000 and frequently published work by West Coast correspondents.

²⁹⁰ *The Saturday Advertiser*, 22 January 1876, 5.

they have been banking all their money in an account for 'Little Mary', their daughter back home in New South Wales.

Such a story could of course have been set on any goldfield, and the fact that Greymouth rather than an Otago field was chosen might have more to do with pleasing the West Coast readership than with veracity. The three subsequent 'Camp Yarns,' however, told respectively by a Yankee, a Tasmanian and a London Cockney, are set in Victoria, draw strongly on British and American characters and culture and have no discernible New Zealand context, while the key elements of 'The Greymouth Chums' – an Irish narrator, the miners' respect for mateship and family values and their willingness to tolerate eccentricity – have become recognisable elements in Coast literature, as has the recurring character of a woman miner dressed as a man for her own safety or practical comfort. That such women existed on the Coast is documented in the example of Mrs Terrill of the Rappahanock²⁹¹ and referenced in Hulme's asexual Kerewin in *The Bone People* as well as characters in the novels of Henrietta Mason, Frank Bruno, Coral Atkinson and Marlene Bennetts.

May cites the West Coast in the mid-1860s as "an economic dependency of Victoria, Hokitika a trans-Tasman suburb of Melbourne"²⁹², a situation which continued to a lesser extent well into the 20th century. Traffic between Hokitika and Melbourne was frequent and easy, a steamer journey taking only five days, and the West Coast settlement looked across the Tasman rather than across the Alps. In the mid-1860s, entertainers such as Thatcher and Small worked Victoria, Otago and the Coast with the same repertoire and often to the same audience; theatrical producer Bland Holt ran the Princess Theatre in Melbourne, brought his troupe to Dunedin, then published the short-lived newspaper *The Tomahawk* in Greymouth/Westport, and even the entire Prince of Wales Opera House, its painted ceiling, ornamental fountain and seating capacity of 1600 vividly described by Felicity Price in *No Angel*²⁹³, arrived in Hokitika from Sydney in packed-down form on the ship *Colonist* 28 December 1865.²⁹⁴ Newspapers were posted between Australia, Ireland and New Zealand and every ship's captain arrived with courtesy copies for the local newspaper office: the *Melbourne Age* carried detailed reports not only of Hokitika shipping

²⁹¹ Jones, *Women of Westland*, 49.

²⁹² May, *West Coast Gold Rushes*, 480.

²⁹³ Price, *No Angel*, 118.

²⁹⁴ Editorial, *West Coast Times*, 2 January, 1866, 2.

arrivals and Westport gold recovery figures but also, on 6 January 1868, of a minor fire started by a vagrant in a disused shop on Greymouth's Mawhera Quay in which no one was hurt. Commercial goods came to the Coast by ship from Melbourne and Coasters shopped by mail order, as Price notes in *Dancing in the Wilderness*; the women on Denniston routinely ordered their ball gowns and dancing shoes as well as household goods and furniture from Australia because it was cheaper, more convenient and much 'classier' than the fashions worn by colonial settlers in Christchurch.²⁹⁵

Stories, literature and music came by the same route; Angela Annabell²⁹⁶ cites Australian bush songs such as 'A New Chum in the Country' which derived from the British music hall song 'The Young Man from the Country' and was first sung in New Zealand as 'The New Chum' in 1860, and the West Coast anthem 'Shanties by the Way', described by journalist Mona Tracy as "a crude ditty which arrived with the diggers from Ballarat, [and] was just as typical of old Hokitika as was the 'Oh Susannah!' of the Californian Forty-Niners"²⁹⁷, was traced by music historian Frank Fyfe to a poem by Australian E J Overbury²⁹⁸. Thatcher's 'Wakamarina' tells of the 1864 rush which attracted Victorian miners to Nelson, and 'The Digger's Farewell' is about an Australian heading back to the Palmer River goldfields after 10 years on the Grey.²⁹⁹ Early newspaper stories and serials set on the goldfields made little distinction between the two places and after the gold rushes, folk music continued to travel between Australia and New Zealand with shearing gangs who regularly crossed the Tasman for work and coal mining unionists who frequently 'ringbolted' from Sydney and Melbourne to the Coast by signing on as supernumerary crew, an accepted practice between maritime and industrial trade unions. As Coast writers Edward Hunter and Henry Kirk demonstrate, poetry and song was a significant tool of the socialist movement in the early 1900s; the audience-specific work of Australian writers Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson was as popular on the Coast as in Victoria because the populations of both regions were by and large like-minded and closely

²⁹⁵ Price, *Dancing in the Wilderness*.

²⁹⁶ A R Annabell, 'The Australian Influence on New Zealand Folk-song,' *Music in New Zealand*, Summer 1889/90, 34-37.

²⁹⁷ Mona Tracy, *West Coast Yesterdays*, Wellington: A H & A W Reed, 1960, 136.

²⁹⁸ Frank Fyfe, *A 'Shanties' or Two: A Study of a Bush Song*, Wellington: New Zealand Folklore Society, 1970.

²⁹⁹ Annabell 34-37.

aligned, but the Wakefield assumption that English cultural tradition would easily transpose to the new colony had little traction on the Coast for the same reason. Allen Curnow's 1945 comment that "it had become natural for the more active-minded New Zealander to regard literature, poetry most of all, as a thing disembodied from any living and tangible surrounding"³⁰⁰ seems equally irrelevant to Coasters whose tradition of situational performance poetry still survives.

The goldfields had a language of their own; in the 1920s Mona Tracy notes that place names were "*the* Greenstone" and "*the* Stafford"³⁰¹. A study nearly a century after the gold rushes³⁰² confirmed that Australian speech patterns, some of known Irish origin, still existed on the Coast; children tended to pronounce the letter H as 'haitch' rather than 'aitch' although the latter was taught at school, the Australian habit of adding 'ie' to words was evident; the words 'possie' (as in 'whitebaiting possie', a secret hiding place) and 'snig' ("they snigged him out of the bar") were Australian in origin and peculiar to the Coast, and broad vowels were more evident on the Coast than in Canterbury.³⁰³ Another Coast figure of speech is the frequently-cited 'the girl of Reilly' to indicate a family name; Irish in origin; the construction is still heard in Greymouth³⁰⁴ but its use by Pearson, Beardsley, Thompson, Ewen, Battye, Flannery and others appears contrived. Jim Henderson contributes the expressions "building a feed", also used by Crump, and "I'm fair blocked" indicating satisfaction after the meal.³⁰⁵ Researcher Mary Durkin records less endearing grammatical constructions common on the Coast in the 1970s; "I seen it", and "I done it" are recognised as 'West Coastisms', although anecdotal evidence shows the usage more prevalent among older people than the 10-12 year olds in the study.³⁰⁶ Durkin records "I done the work", "Are yous going?", "Here it goes" (meaning here it is) "We was just...", the latter common even among educated adults, as was the use of 'me' for 'my' ("I want me book")³⁰⁷, and she notes a deliberate avoidance of middle class speech and

³⁰⁰ Allen Curnow, 'Introduction,' *A Book of New Zealand Verse*, 1923-1945, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1945, 21.

³⁰¹ Tracy 90

³⁰² Mary Elizabeth Durkin, 'A Study of the Pronunciation, Oral Grammar and Vocabulary of West Coast School-Children,' M A Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1972.

³⁰³ Durkin 123.

³⁰⁴ It was used in casual conversation with the writer in 2010 by a Blackball man in his mid-60s.

³⁰⁵ Jim Henderson (ed), *Tales of the Coast*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1984, 90.

³⁰⁶ Durkin 17.

³⁰⁷ Durkin 117.

mannerisms by Coast pupils with educated parents, a trend observed twenty years later by Heidi Quinn³⁰⁸ who notes that at Westland High School, “Academic prowess seemed to hamper rather than further acceptance by the dominant peer group, and students were keen to play down their academic achievement”³⁰⁹ and, of the ubiquitous West Coast “yous”; “It is not so much the mere presence of *yous* in the speech of West Coasters that sets it apart from other varieties of NZE, but the popularity of the second person plural pronoun among female speakers.”³¹⁰ Although both studies are small, isolated and tentative in their conclusions, such work reinforces the idea of a distinct vernacular west of the Alps; Coasters still say “Hooroo” to each other when they part, refer to non-Coasters as “from away”, eat their crib³¹¹ at mid-day and reach for their lammies³¹² when the Barber³¹³ blows.

In its heyday, the Coast literally was the ‘Wild West’ that has become legend. It was a region of boom and bust that saw towns spring up and vanish in a matter of months (giving towns like Ross a “random appearance” and “air of improbability”³¹⁴), and there were bushrangers, big noters, bargirls and brawls, easy meat for the poets and balladeers. Poetry, song and theatre were working class entertainment and there was an earthiness about it, a refreshing absence of lofty intellectualism that has shaped the way Coasters see themselves. The travelling balladeers in the music halls were succeeded by post-colonial poets such as Cornelius O’Regan, and Hugh Smith, the self-styled ‘Bard of Inangahua’ (and possibly the first New Zealand poet to have his work mentioned on his memorial stone). They published verse in classical forms but they also entertained with recitations in the local miners’ halls and Lodge gatherings and their work referred to local characters, local events and days gone by. Smith wrote that the old timers “Corduroy’d the swampy muck-holes,/Wash’d our moleskins in the duck-holes”³¹⁵ and “Where the pigeons basked

³⁰⁸ Heidi Quinn, ‘Variation in NZE Syntax and Morphology: A Study of the Acceptance and Use of Grammatical Variants among Canterbury and West Coast Teenagers.’ MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1995.

³⁰⁹ Quinn 29.

³¹⁰ Quinn 147.

³¹¹ A packed lunch – the Blackball miners’ crib time strike of 1908 was over the time allocated to eat lunch.

³¹² The West Coast word for a Swannndri or its equivalent long woollen overshirt.

³¹³ ‘The Barber’ is the catabatic wind that blows at the mouth of the Grey River, so named because it cuts like a razor.

³¹⁴ Atkinson, *Copper Top* 54.

³¹⁵ Smith, Hugh, ‘The Old-time Pioneers,’ *Poems of an Ayrshire Scot*, 14.

on Monday,/There a shanty stood by Sunday”³¹⁶; it may not have been art but it was certainly documentary and definitely local. The sentiments of these performance poets are “prudent and public”, Bill Pearson concludes. “boozy West Coast camaraderie, watery tributes to bonnie lassies; even the lusty heyday of the ragtowns with their brothels and casinos and boatloads of dancing-girls from Sydney is diluted into a nostalgic wink at the waywardness of the boys. ... the men were assembled to drink and be happy, and the bard's job was to give them thoughts compatible with beery wellbeing.”³¹⁷

The myth of the West Coast character – hard drinking, boisterous, generous and fair-minded – was generated in the Greymouth and Hokitika music halls of the 1860s. Hokitika's Corinthian Hall, where Thatcher, his wife Annie (the soprano Madame Vitelli) and Irish comedian Joe Small played for three months at the height of the 1865 goldrush, was a long, low corrugated iron structure with three bars, a stage and no windows. It had a sawdust floor and no seating of any kind, and in August 1865 the Thatchers played a charity benefit there to raise money for seats and wooden flooring.³¹⁸ Thatcher's material for each of his three New Zealand tours was a mixture of songs and set-pieces from the Australian goldfields, nostalgic ballads and ditties from England, Scotland and Ireland, lampoons of current national affairs and sharply satirical local material gleaned from shrewd observations and judicious research. He spent his days around town and on the waterfront and soon knew which policeman, merchant, town dignitary or politician could be mocked from the stage to best effect, a technique which brought roars of delight from the diggers and occasional retribution from the gentlemen whose dignities were affronted. The extreme example of the 19th century Coast character was goldfields storekeeper Dick Seddon, who came via the Australian fields and later became New Zealand's longest serving prime minister; he established the West Coasters' Association, which held dinner gatherings in Wellington, and his favourite party piece was ‘New Chum at the Diggings’, a song brought across from Victoria. Seddon is mythologized in Coast fiction as a flamboyant, egalitarian self-made champion of the working classes, and his vehement enmity towards Chinese diggers, which saw the poll tax of 1881 increased under his leadership from £10 to £100 per head, is largely ignored, as were the Chinese themselves in

³¹⁶ Smith, Hugh, ‘Inangahua Goldfields Jubilee,’ *Poems of an Ayrshire Scot*, 93.

³¹⁷ Pearson, *Fretful Sleepers*, 13.

³¹⁸ ‘Thatcher's Farewell,’ *West Coast Times* 19 August 1865, 3

early Coast fiction. Beardsley acknowledges their alienation and loneliness in a stereotyped ten-page vignette,³¹⁹ but it is not until the historical novelists of the last decade (notably Kelly and Tremain) that Chinese miners, albeit romanticised and reframed in a 21st century cultural context, appear in literature as significant characters. The historical reality was that some West Coast Chinese became successful merchants and intermarriages were not unusual, but few Chinese abandoned their different cultural practices; in 1917 when Chinese market gardener Ah Wei applied for the job of sexton at Greymouth cemetery he advised that, “I will be able to frighten away the devil, a lost art with other sextons.”³²⁰

The traditions continue: in the 1890s, O'Regan recorded an old pub yarn about Michael O'Flynn of Inangahua (who mistook his doctor's advice to eat only 'animal food' and made himself ill on grass and chaff); in 1905 'Waratah' told the same tale about Brandy Jack of the Lyell³²¹ and more than 60 years later Greymouth MP and poet Paddy Blanchfield, another larger-than-life Coaster, recited and published his own version of the story.³²² Gold warden Thomas Kynnersley, commissioner for northern (Buller) goldfields in the late 1860s, was reputed to have taken two loaded revolvers off a drunken woman at Razorback (Punakaiki) by taking her into the pub and buying her two glasses of brandy (when she put down the second revolver to take the second glass he snatched them up)³²³; the story became another West Coast myth and surfaced again in Coral Atkinson's 2005 novel *The Love Apple*.

Such material came primarily from the reminiscences of old settlers edited by writers such as W H S Hindmarsh, who wrote for the *Grey River Argus* under the pseudonym 'Waratah' and whose work was reprinted in book form as *Tales of the Golden West (Under Aorangi)* under the same pseudonym in 1906, C J Pfaff, who published *The Diggers' Story* in 1914,³²⁴ Mona Tracy, whose articles in *The Press* (later published as *West Coast Yesterdays*) re-told the pioneering stories, and Ted Kehoe whose fortnightly

³¹⁹ Beardsley 72-82.

³²⁰ Reprinted in *Greymouth Evening Star* July 28, 1979; from a cutting found in 'Notes and Papers relating to a West Coast anthology,' Literary papers, Hocken MS – 2605/29

³²¹ Waratah 165. Brandy Jack's Creek near Reefton is still signposted.

³²² Blanchfield, *Ballads of a Coaster*.

³²³ McGill, *The Lion and the Wolfhound*, 43.

³²⁴ C J Pfaff, *The diggers' story; or, Tales and reminiscences of the golden coast, from Westland's earliest pioneers*, Wellington: West Coasters' Association, 1914.

programme 'Forest, Birds, Maori and Pioneer', broadcast on Greymouth radio 3YZ from 1941 to 1959, elicited from listeners a number of previously unpublished stories and anecdotes³²⁵.

Hindmarsh ('Waratah') arrived on the Coast from Australia in February 1867 on the steamer *Bright Star*, and his descriptions and anecdotes, many written in the first person, are well-written and enduring. He describes trying to sell life insurance to Dick Seddon (to whom the book is dedicated), staying with Werita Tainui and his family at Mawhera, attending court sittings and inspecting early coal mines; he records the ascent of Aorangi by Tiechelmann, Newton, Low, Clark and Graham on 3 February 1905³²⁶, recaps Coast history from Ngahue and the greenstone legends to the 1825 wreck of the *Rifleman*, the explorations of Heaphy, Brunner, Rochfort and Reuben Waite and the crimes of the Burgess and Kelly gang. He also repeats anecdotes such as the 'street paved with gold' incident near Hokitika's Prince of Wales Hotel in January 1866, when women and children gathered payable gold from Revell Street that was later found to have leaked from a bag of gold dust carried past on a pack horse.³²⁷ Hindmarsh retired to 'Quartzopolis' (Reefton) and his account of the life and death of Bridget Goodwin ('Little Biddy of the Buller')³²⁸ has been cribbed and amended by many writers since. His pastoral tale 'The Widow and the Tar'³²⁹ appears again in Blerta's 1977 film 'Wild Man'. Recent writers of historical goldfields fiction draw mainly from Faris and May, although only Kaye Kelly and Charlotte Randall cite their sources, and Eric Beardsley sets the scene in *Blackball 08* through the character of E Iveagh Lord, drawn from Waratah's descriptions and Lord's own *Ballads of Bung*.

In the wider New Zealand context of Victorian and post-colonial culture, writers began to express themselves and communicate with each other through New Zealand newspapers, journals and writing competitions as well as Australian ones. Although for some this meant identifying as New Zealanders for the first time, there was much common ground, as most had Irish, Scots or British ancestry (Hindmarsh writes of a dinner

³²⁵ Edward Luke Kehoe's radio scripts, catalogued in 2009 by Carol Dawber, are held in the Grey District Library and the West Coast Historical Museum.

³²⁶ Waratah 36.

³²⁷ Waratah 41, also in C J Patrick, 'Wakamarina to the Coast', Pfaff 62.

³²⁸ Waratah 58-63.

³²⁹ Waratah 76.

conversation at a Kumara Hotel where there was general hilarity at the expense of “a Yankee clerk who had never heard of Bobby Burns”³³⁰). Because of shipping patterns, their common goldmining background and perhaps their Scots and Irish roots, the Coast’s writers and artists connected with Otago more strongly than with Canterbury or the North Island, and vice-versa. The Greymouth Literary Association was established in August 1868, but by the 1890s Westport and Reefton also had a strong circle of writers, some of whom were regular contributors to literary columns in the *Otago Witness*, and two early novels – *McPherson’s Gully* and *The Two Lawyers*³³¹ – provide West Coast regional settings whose local colour and authenticity can be compared with later Mills & Boon-style romances. In stark contrast ‘Alice Lyle: a West Coast Romance’, a short story appearing in *Zealandia* in 1890,³³² had no discernible connection with the Coast; the “pretty West Coast town” in which it was set boasted hot weather, a tennis club and conventional society attitudes, and could have been anywhere.

Music hall, theatre and sports continued to play a large role in the cultural life of the Coast and writers like Charles Dickens and Mary Braddon were popular in the goldmining towns, but poetry, particularly recitation, was also widely embraced and appreciated; in Hokitika in 1869, for example, theatre entertainer Joe Small ‘brought the house down’ with a parody of Tennyson’s ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ condemning the Greymouth Council’s money-grubbing antics³³³, and at a Lodge dinner a few months later the speeches were accompanied by six songs and four recitations.³³⁴ O’Regan’s fame spread remarkably quickly and widely, a phenomenon not fully explained by his brother Patrick’s patronage; his poetry was written and published over only four years but when he died at the age of 21 he was not only eulogised in newspapers from the *Hawke’s Bay Tribune* to the *Otago Witness*, but also by Christchurch poet Louisa Blake, who had never met him but wrote a poem in tribute to his work³³⁵. In an article on the old gold rush days published in the Christchurch *Star* in 1905, ‘West Lander’ commented on O’Regan’s untimely death, saying

³³⁰ Waratah 90.

³³¹ W M Southan, *The Two Lawyers*, Dunedin: John Mackay, 1881.

³³² L I S. ‘Alice Lyle: A West Coast Romance.’ *Zealandia* 1 January 1890: 429-40.

³³³ ‘The Charge for the £600,’ *West Coast Times*, issue 1035, 15 January 1869, 2.

³³⁴ ‘Odd Fellows’ Dinner,’ *West Coast Times*, issue 1279, 28 October 1869, 2

³³⁵ Louisa Blake, ‘In Memory of C J O’Regan, the Inangahua Poet,’ *The Evening Star and Brunnerton Advocate*, 5 October 1895.

“One there was whom we who knew him, and recognised his great promise, hoped would pen the Saga of the West,³³⁶ and that same year O’Regan was the subject of the winning speech in an oratical competition in Greymouth.³³⁷ He was frequently compared to the English romantic poet John Keats, perhaps because both men died young and their published work spanned four years, but unlike Keats he was well received and praised during his lifetime; the clue seems to be that he was “amongst those who hailed New Zealand as the land of their birth”.³³⁸

The O’Regans were very typical Irish immigrants; Patrick Joseph O’Regan was an illiterate labourer who returned to Sydney from the West Coast goldfields in 1868 to marry his sweetheart Mary Burke, who emigrated from Ireland to Australia with her three sisters.³³⁹ The couple ran the Harp of Erin Hotel in Charleston until 1873 when they moved to Inangahua Junction and began bush felling but Mary encouraged their children’s education and the eldest, Patrick junior, was a journalist in Reefton before entering Parliament as MP for Inangahua, then Buller (1893-1899), and later a solicitor in Wellington and a strong advocate for Labour causes. Cornelius, the youngest surviving child, contracted rheumatic fever as a 12-year-old cutting wood with his father and spent the rest of his short life pursuing intellectual rather than physical activity, but his work reflects a deep love of his social and physical environment, as in ‘A Lay of the Old Life’ (possibly the last poem he wrote) which speaks of the joys of sleeping in a tent among the manuka and hearing “weka to weka replying/In the beautiful fall of the night.”³⁴⁰ He was a dedicated and perceptive teacher with a strength and wisdom beyond his years, evidenced in poems such as ‘Solaced’³⁴¹ which tells of meeting a child on a beach, but his popularity on the Coast was enhanced by his ear for the vernacular and his ability to tell a good yarn.

Although she never knew her uncles, O’Regan’s niece Pauline, a well-known teaching sister in the Catholic order and a popular writer, was brought up on the Coast in that same family tradition of storytelling and political advocacy (her father was Inangahua

³³⁶ ‘West Lander,’ The Passing of the Digger. *Star*, 4 November 1905, 2.

³³⁷ J Devonport’s winning speech was on ‘Cornelius O’Regan, New Zealand’s Poet,’ Oratical Competition, St Colomba Club, *Grey River Argus*, 11 November 1905.

³³⁸ Editorial, *Greymouth Evening Star*, September 1895.

³³⁹ Jim O’Regan interview, Reefton, 19 May 2009.

³⁴⁰ Cornelius O’Regan, *Poems* 29.

³⁴¹ Cornelius, O’Regan, *Poems* 28.

County Chairman); her vignette of the Reefton races in *Aunts and Windmills* not only carries the colours, sounds and smells of the day but advocates a piece of West Coast wisdom: “that if a regulation doesn’t make a lot of sense then the best way to deal with it is to walk around it!”³⁴² O’Regan recalls when she was a child, “everyone seemed to think and speak in much more lyrical language than they do today. It was common practice to make a comment on a human situation or express a deep-felt emotion by quoting a line of poetry or an epigram, proverb or common saying.”³⁴³ Poetic language allowed for the use of the imagination.

The tradition of recording characters and events in song or verse has continued on the Coast where, well into the twentieth century, public figures such as MP Paddy Blanchfield gained respect and popularity by performing occasional verse. South Westland writer Vonnie Alexander makes the point in her nostalgic social history *Westland Heritage*, published in 1994, by ending each chapter with a pertinent locally-written song or poem. Her comment that “Verse and ballads are a key to history. Their satire, sentimentality and humour record happenings and characters seldom mentioned in official records”³⁴⁴ is amply illustrated by, among other gems, ‘The Graveyard in the Bush’ by Haast pioneer W D (Dinnie) Nolan³⁴⁵ and ‘Davey Gunn’ by Joseph (Joe) Henry Fache Charles, which commemorates cattle run holder Davey Gunn’s heroic 50-mile run from Big Bay to the Hollyford camp (including a 12-mile row down Lake McKerrow) in 1936 to get help after a plane crash killed one hunter and injured the pilot and three other passengers.³⁴⁶ More recent collections such as *Blackball Beckons* include similar material.

It is difficult to see West Coast writing in the larger context of the cultural nationalism that began to evolve in New Zealand writing during the 1930s, with its emphasis on exile, longing for history and distance from Europe. There was little sign of this on the coast, where there had traditionally been closer ties with Australia and the USA than with England, and regular two-way traffic of people and ideas across the Tasman. It was not until Bill Pearson’s *Coal Flat* in 1963 that Coast writing began to connect with national

³⁴² O’Regan, Pauline, ‘Race Cards and Equality,’ *Aunts and Windmills*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991, 53-60.

³⁴³ O’Regan, Pauline, 70.

³⁴⁴ Alexander, *Westland Heritage* 29.

³⁴⁵ Alexander, *Westland Heritage* 12-13.

³⁴⁶ Alexander, *Westland Heritage* 130-131.

rather than international and universal themes. It is noticeable, however, that in the recent historical novels set on the Coast, with the single exception of *Hokitika Town*, the main characters are English immigrants and thus conform to the accepted national settler history rather than the reality of West Coast settlement.

Carrying the canary: coalmining

“... But I’ll carry the canary/ in its cage and you/huddle at the entrance/and sniff gas like glue.” Kim Eggleston.³⁴⁷

The third extractive industry on the Coast was coalmining, and the West Coast was where the New Zealand labour movement and New Zealand’s communist party started, both spawned not from the good fertile Anglo-Saxon settler soil of planned settlements like Canterbury and Dunedin, but from outsiders who came from over the sea and swam into the Coast like whitebait. They brought unionism and scientific socialism, they knew about the oppression of workers and black people, they had seen violence and riots and they were not afraid to wind up the rhetoric. Unionism came with the Lancashire coalminers in the 1880s and took root; thirty years later activists like Bob Semple, Pat Hickey and Paddy Webb picked their fights by working on the Arthur’s Pass road gangs and in the Denniston and Blackball coalmines, and when they went to jail the West Coast bands played them on their way in triumph. Union men were widely read³⁴⁸ and their informed solidarity at once fed the independent spirit and encouraged concern for the human condition, which was “the real intent, /And the heart of the Union Man”.³⁴⁹ Blackball GP Dr Stanley Aylward, a late convert to socialism and the model for Pearson’s Dr Alexander in *Coal Flat*, concluded that the differences between the farmers in his previous Canterbury practice (“self-centred, suspicious and dull”) and his miners’ union patients (“considerate, friendly, alert”) were due to their respective social environments. He said the miner was “not isolated in his work or his home, discussions and arguments sharpen his wits and make him think.”³⁵⁰ Jean Devanny, who moved from a farming settlement to a mining community, identifies the

³⁴⁷ Eggleston, *25 poems* 6.

³⁴⁸ Mark Derby, ‘Subversive Literature for All the Family - Radical Literary Culture in N Z 1900-1914,’ *Labour History Conference*, ed. Raymond Morkey. Auckland University of Technology, 2007.

³⁴⁹ Kirk, dedication, *The Transport Workers’ Song Book*.

³⁵⁰ B H S Aylward MB, ‘Letter to Jane’ November 1943, 82 (Unpublished manuscript, Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, A/N 661).

same point. “The miners congregated. If there happened to be a seed of intelligence in a miner, it got an airing.”³⁵¹

Coal was identified as an economic resource before the gold rush; by the 1880s, the West Coast was more and more dependent on the mining industry, and “... few other New Zealand communities lived in such narrow confines or existed for such a single economic pursuit”.³⁵² Miners lived and worked together in an environment of high risk and mutual dependence; they took a pride in their skills and for many of the British miners their occupation was inter-generational, a point picked up by Felicity Price in *Dancing in the Wilderness* and Jenny Patrick in her portrayal of the Scobie family in *The Denniston Rose*. Although they brought unionism to the coalfields, those first British miners were seen by many Coasters as ‘outsiders’ who “lacked the pride of colonials” and were generally lower class and morally inferior³⁵³; their unions were organised along strictly hierarchical lines and they tended to socialise among themselves. Miners’ politics are only peripheral to Patrick’s two Coast novels, which, although carefully respectful of historical events, are more concerned with the social dynamics of the men, women and children on the hill; like Felicity Price (*Dancing in the Wilderness*) and Jean Devanny (*Poor Swine*) she is well aware of the dramatic possibilities of Denniston and Burnett’s Face as ‘otherworldly’ (possibilities exploited in Peter Jackson’s film *Forgotten Silver*³⁵⁴, where a derelict bathhouse on Denniston becomes evidence of an earlier civilisation). As former Denniston resident Cecilia Adams explains, “Never has a community as a whole, two townships in fact, lived and thrived on a mountain plateau 2,000 feet up in the air, balanced seemingly halfway between Heaven and earth; fed, clothed and otherwise sustained and in the end carried to their last resting place, by way of an incline, the top mile of which could rightly be compared to a huge ladder leaning against a still more huge building.”³⁵⁵ The concerts, parties and dances described by Adams, with their miners’ bands and the women carrying their satin dancing shoes through the mud to be changed into at the hall, appear in Price and Patrick’s novels; but Devanny’s Denniston is “... that turgid, strange region ... up in the

³⁵¹ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 152.

³⁵² Patrick James O’Farrell, ‘Politics and Coal; the Socialist Vanguard, 1904-08’, *Miners and Militants* 101.

³⁵³ Richardson, *Coal, Class & Community* 3.

³⁵⁴ Costa Botes and Peter Jackson, *Forgotten Silver*, NZ: Wingnut Films, 1995.

³⁵⁵ Cecilia Adams, *The Hill*, Christchurch: J W Baty Ltd, 1971, 3.

clouds”³⁵⁶; her characters are from a later generation and less isolated, their communities more diluted with itinerant workers. Pattrick prefaces *Denniston Rose* with “Damn Denniston/ Damn the track/ Damn the way both there and back,” an 1884 quote from an old coalminer which is effectively echoed by a woman in Hunter’s *The Road the Men Came Home*; “God strike me dead if I ever go up that damned hill again,” she cried from the depths of her soul, as she shook her clenched hand at the Never, Never Hill. The words sounded like rank blasphemy, but carried the earnestness of prayer.”³⁵⁷

The worst disaster in New Zealand’s coalmining history occurred at 9.30am on 26 March 1896, when an explosion of methane gas deep in the Brunner mine killed 65 men. The event was recorded in a folk song, ‘Down in the Brunner Mine’, collected and published by Neil Colquhoun in 1965.³⁵⁸ The origins of the song are unknown but comparison with the ‘Death Song of the Huntly Miners’, written by Hawke’s Bay activist and newspaper editor Arthur Desmond after a similar event in 1890,³⁵⁹ suggests that the Brunner song derives from a different era. A typical line from Desmond’s verse reads: “... thousands received for a lifetime of bondage/ Our dead comrades’ wages - the earth for a pall!” ‘Down in the Brunner Mine’ uses simpler structures and is obviously written to be sung, as in “The miner’s breath comes short and hot/He’s using all the breath he’s got/Whether it’s good for his lungs or not ...”³⁶⁰ The surviving version does not specifically refer to the 1896 disaster or its cause, but covers the general miners’ lot of hard work, bad air and constant fear of a cave-in, hinting of disaster only in the last line; “For the trembling earth speaks Judgement Day.” Some of the original material may have been lost but another possible explanation is that it was written as a generic coalminers’ song by someone with no local knowledge and that the Brunner Mine was named simply because it fitted the metre of the verse.

Susan Battye and Thelma Eakin’s *Shadow of the Valley* was written not just as a teaching tool, using contemporary newspaper reports and official records, but “also to discover and

³⁵⁶ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 13.

³⁵⁷ Hunter, *The Road* 40.

³⁵⁸ Colquhoun, *New Zealand Folk Songs* 58. The song was used as the basis for a musical score written by Anthony Ritchie and commissioned by the Onslow Brass Band in 1996, the centenary of the disaster.

³⁵⁹ Arthur Desmond, ‘Death Song for the Huntly Miners,’ *Observer*, 10 January 1891, 9.

³⁶⁰ Colquhoun, *New Zealand Folk Songs* 58.

record the people's experience of the Brunner mine disaster,"³⁶¹ and this oral history approach found them an eyewitness to the 1896 event as well as to anecdotal material from informants' parents and grandparents. "The information they gave is not available from any written source," Battye said in the preface to the first publication in 1980. "We do believe, however, that we have recorded what many local people thought and felt at the time and this is most important to us."³⁶² Their eyewitness was Billy Mosely, whose father was brought out of the mine among the dead, and the story built into the play was that the doctor triaging victims at the pithead declared Mosely dead but that his son Billy saw that he wasn't. "Mam, mam, it's all right, he's not dead ... I seen him move."³⁶³ The names of the 65 who died at Brunner are read in a roll of honour as part of the script. Battye and Eakin use other historical figures, such as the widowed Mrs Collins and her daughters Janie and Sarah, include the arrival of Dick Seddon and his wife by train with a contingent of pick and shovel-wielding gold miners to help with the rescue, and record the fundraising concert in Napier where Coast miner James McEwen sings 'The Brunner Dirge' (adapted by Battye from 'Death Song for the Huntly Miners'). The emphasis is on the aftermath, however, covering the Royal Commission of Enquiry which blamed the miners and the subsequent supreme court case brought by miner George Geoghegan and 23 others against the Point Elizabeth Coal Company; although there was little money from the government for the bereaved families, unionists throughout New Zealand and Australia contributed to the relief fund and, more importantly, the miners saw justice done and the cause of the tragedy acknowledged.

Jean Devanny, who set her novels *Dawn Beloved* and *Poor Swine* in the coalmining communities of Puponga³⁶⁴ and Denniston respectively, was a feminist socialist whose stories were often romantic but whose themes were political, based on the psychological and economic pressures facing her contemporaries, and her fiction is based on her own experiences in mining towns. Biographer Carole Ferrier describes *Dawn Beloved* as Devanny's version of D H Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, but notes the *Otago Daily Times* reading of it as a novel about class: "the first attempt to depict in fiction form the home life

³⁶¹ Battye, *Shadow* 7.

³⁶² Battye, *Shadow* 8.

³⁶³ Battye, *Shadow* 38.

³⁶⁴ For reasons outlined earlier I have considered the western Golden Bay settlements of Puponga and Paturau as part of the West Coast.

of the West Coast miner and to analyse the reasons for his communistic tendencies.”³⁶⁵ For 16-year-old Devanny (born Jane Crook) the family’s move to Puponga was a move to a brighter life, not least because her father and brothers who already worked in the mine were under the same roof again. The contrast between farming and mining communities was marked; more than 500 people lived in the coalmining settlement, there were two working mines and two stores, each with a lending library, and “Puponga spelt sociability; books!”³⁶⁶ Inhabitants lived in small two or three-roomed shacks and bought their supplies as they needed them; there was little to do outside the men’s shifts down the mine and their wives’ basic housekeeping and child-rearing; there was no public house, so drinking was done at home, in the single men’s huts, or outdoors, which threw the men more than usually into each others’ company; the miners were voracious readers who bought books and passed them around freely, and the women were in and out of each others’ homes chatting and gossiping. There were Australians, Cornishmen, a number of Lancashire and Scots miners and some Dutch and Scandinavian men at Puponga, many of whom had worked at Brunner or Denniston.³⁶⁷ Devanny’s characters in the largely autobiographical *Dawn Beloved*, especially her descriptions of the men’s entertainments and the two-up school,³⁶⁸ are drawn from life. By 1904, when the Puponga Coal mine, owned by a private company of English investors, was operational and the Puponga Miners’ Union was formed, the unions had subjected themselves to the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Act and all disputes were settled in court.

Into this mix in the early 1900s came a small group of socialists, mostly from Australia, with a classic Marxist agenda to convert and educate the workers, organise them into a collective labour movement and acquire political power. One of the key men was Robert Semple, who had been marked as a union agitator in his native Australia after the strike at Gippsland and came to the West Coast under a false name. He worked as a tunneller on the Midland line and then at the Runanga coal mine, where the first miners’ union was formed in 1904, quickly earning the nickname of ‘Bob the Ranter’ for his

³⁶⁵ Carole Ferrier, ‘Jean Devanny, 1894-1962’, *Kōtare* 2007, Special Issue — Essays in New Zealand Literary Biography Series One: ‘Women Prose Writers to World War I’ Victoria University of Wellington, 2008, Wellington. <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Whi071Kota-t1-g1-t9.html>.

³⁶⁶ Carole Ferrier (ed), *Point of Departure; the Autobiography of Jean Devanny*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986, 44.

³⁶⁷ Peter Dyer, *The Coal Mines of Puponga*, Picton: River Press, 2003, 164-165.

³⁶⁸ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 172-175.

outspoken radicalism. When Premier Dick Seddon died in 1906 the way was clear for the militant unionists to push the miners' cause and by 1907 Bob Semple, who was to become a close friend of the Devannys and a cabinet minister in the first Labour government of 1935, was the organising secretary for the labour movement on the Coast. Two other activists, blacklisted Australian miner Paddy Webb and Nelson-born radical Pat Hickey (mistakenly referred to later by Devanny as an Australian)³⁶⁹, turned up at Puponga soon after the Devannys were married and they too influenced Jean's political development.

Devanny's husband Hal became union secretary, taking over from her brother Charlie in 1911, and the couple were active Marxists. Like the Rogers family at Blackball, whose story is told in Beardsley's *Blackball 08* and Paul Maunder's play 'On Yer Bike Mate' in *Blackball 03*, the Devannys hosted regular study groups, sold and circulated the weekly socialist newspaper *The Maoriland Worker*³⁷⁰ and, after they had moved from their two-roomed shack to the larger house previously occupied by the Crook family, provided meals and accommodation for visiting unionists like Semple and Hickey, whom they got to know well. Unlike Beardsley's Elizabeth Rogers, however, the women in Devanny's novels are still at the beginning of their fight for equality within the socialist movement, and this feminist agenda is central to her work. When she decides to study socialism, Dawn is told by Mrs Taylor, wife of the union chairman, that it would "only make you discontented",³⁷¹ but she 'joins the men', moving away from the marginalised role of miner's wife to the political role of intellectual equal, and it is in this role that she begins to challenge notions of respect and equality and, incidentally, gives a clear insight into the structure and administration of Marxist study groups established in the coal mining community.

Devanny found Hickey, who played a key role in the famous Blackball miners' strike of 1908 fictionalised by Beardsley and Maunder and referenced by Pearson³⁷², "a

³⁶⁹ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 62.

³⁷⁰ This former shearers' union publication was taken over by the miners' union in 1910 and became the official voice of the Federation of Labour. Produced in Wellington and edited by Australian socialist Robert Samuel Ross who was brought to New Zealand (via the West Coast) for the job, it carried Australian, New Zealand and European content. Contributors included Ettie Rout, Edward Tregear and Edward Hunter.

³⁷¹ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 205.

³⁷² Pearson, *Coal Flat* 281.

true intellectual, an omnivorous and deeply thoughtful reader.”³⁷³. Hickey had worked in America where he had belonged to the Western Federation of Miners and the American Socialist Party and had experienced violent union extremism, and he brought the ‘Workers of the World Unite’ ideology of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), organised in Chicago in 1905, to the West Coast of New Zealand via Australia. An ardent Marxist, a regular contributor to the *Maoriland Worker* and a shrewd and popular public speaker, he fired the miners with his fighting spirit and fierce oratory and backed it up with revolutionary literature imported from Chicago. He and the other socialist leaders organised the unions at Denniston, Blackball and Runanga, and when they were fired from the privately-owned coalmines for political agitation they continued to find work in the state-owned mines. (Famously, during the 1908 ‘crib strike’ at Blackball, the union thwarted an auction of miners’ possessions, seized in lieu of unpaid fines, by appointing a single bidder who bought the entire stock for 12s.6d and returned the items to their owners; the story is referenced by Hunter, Pearson, Beardsley and Maunder.)

By now the West Coast produced 60 percent of the country’s coal and the government was too wary of economic disruption to take on such a fight. The spearheading trio of Semple, Webb and Hickey, flanked and supported by other militants, was comprised of men who could talk to miners in their own language and work alongside them with physical skills, but impress them with oratory, and while to some extent they preached “ideology without intellectuality”³⁷⁴, young idealists like Jean and Hal Devanny learned from them and were influenced by them. There was also an element of elitism, “a little magic air of intellect and superiority”³⁷⁵ among the socialist miners, which Devanny the writer was quick to recognise and comment on and which her character Lily Sweet emphasised in *Poor Swine*.

While Devanny was developing her theories at Puponga, another West Coast socialist was inspiring miners with his poetry. Edward J Hunter arrived on the West Coast as a 20-year-old in 1906 from the Lanarkshire coalfields of Scotland, and moved on to Huntly where he was an active socialist and a member of the Federation of Labour (the ‘Red Feds’). He returned to Denniston in 1912 to preach the American IWW message, now

³⁷³ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 61.

³⁷⁴ O’Farrell 114.

³⁷⁵ Devanny, ‘The Springs of Human Action’, *Old Savage and Other Stories* 163.

formally adopted by the NZ Federation of Labour (the 'Red Feds'), that "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the means of production and abolish the wage system".³⁷⁶ He was keen on worker education and a popular orator on issues such as 'Heredity and Environment' and 'The Class Struggle',³⁷⁷ and he continued to write for the *Maoriland Worker* and exhort miners up and down the Coast to follow the red flag. "Tis coming! 'Tis coming! A scarlet wave ...", he exulted when socialism came to Denniston and 150 women, children and men (the order is his) gathered to hear Paddy Webb and John Dowgray speak and see the 'People's Flag' unfurled. His report in the *Maoriland Worker* is in verse, and he commemorates the exact time and date ("Sunday evening, March 31st, 1912") and the number attending in his poem 'At "The Brake."' ³⁷⁸ By now there was a clear rift between the Red Feds and the more conservative miners, and up at Puponga Jean Devanny, the militant wife of a militant trade union secretary who had the job of calling the miners out in support of the Huntly miners' strike in 1912, had her own taste of action when "into my house, into my bedroom, a stream of women came pouring ... like a gaggle of enraged geese"³⁷⁹

Hunter was arrested for sedition after the general strike of October 1913, which followed closely after the Waihi miners' strike. West Coast miners followed the lead of the Wellington watersiders and shipwrights in the general strike by attempting a total blockade of the West Coast ports, marching behind slogans like "Arise ye workers, for liberty is at stake."³⁸⁰ They were unable to close the port of Hokitika but Greymouth and Westport ground to a halt, tensions mounted and the socialist strike leaders, including Hunter, threatened to bring the miners to Wellington in force. He claimed responsibility for trying to blow up the Denniston incline and thus sabotage production, although the police blamed "an anonymous Australian anarchist"³⁸¹, and he was arrested in Wellington after a fiery speech in which he promised that blood would be shed if necessary and that if the 'specials' came to the Coast they would be met with equal opposition. In *Dancing in the Wilderness*

³⁷⁶ 'Political Parties', from *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, ed A. H. McLintock, 1966.

³⁷⁷ Richardson, *Coal, Class & Community* 131.

³⁷⁸ Hunter, 'At "The Brake,"' *Ballads of the Track* 45-47.

³⁷⁹ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 62.

³⁸⁰ Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community* 147.

³⁸¹ Len Richardson, 'Billy Banjo: Coal Miner, Socialist, Poet and Novelist,' *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, eds Pat Maloney and Kerry Taylor, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002, 77.

Felicity Price makes the point, through Etta Jackson's husband Ted who accompanies 'Banjo Hunter' to Wellington, that "it was all a set-up, worker against worker"³⁸²; the waterfront confrontation between unionists and specials was brought to a head over the loading of racehorses on a ship because "Racehorses arouse passion and national pride; racehorses are more of a national symbol than cabbages or cattle."³⁸³

It was a defining moment for the West Coast socialists, who had for years tried to rally the more moderate miners. Hunter, Devanny and many others believed that revolution was imminent, but in the months before the general strike there was a major reorganisation of the labour movement. The United Federation of Labour and the Social Democratic Party were formed, the general strike failed and the rhetoric of the moment faded, although political activism continued. Historian Michael King argues convincingly that the 'Red revolution' failed in New Zealand firstly because the unions and the communities they functioned in were small and fragmented in a society which lacked class consciousness, and secondly because the workers aspired to the same things as everyone else in the country: to own their own homes, to educate their children and to have job security. Ideologically, he says, there was no conflict.³⁸⁴

In 1913 the Blackball miners struck against the proposed introduction of the 'dog-watch,' a third shift underground between 10pm and 6am, and confidently expected the newly formed United Federation of Labour to support them, but they were left to 'go it alone' and returned to work after three weeks. To Edward Hunter, who had done his best to lead the Denniston miners into the fight, it was a betrayal, and he dedicated 'Fair Freedom's Morn' to the women, children and men of Blackball in commemoration of their effort to abolish the dog-watch "from the Coal-hells of the Coast". The poem celebrates freedom fighters from Roman times, mentions slave pens, scaffold, bayonet and ball and invokes Burns, Shelley and Swinburne before getting to the nub of the matter, that the Buller men, including Hunter's own workmates, let Blackball down and were shamed. "Had we but fought,/though we together fell,/Hope still had lived!" he laments, and regrets the timidity which turned the Buller men into scabs. His last lines drop the rhetoric and foretell internecine strife:

³⁸² Price, *Dancing in the Wilderness* 183.

³⁸³ Price, *Dancing in the Wilderness* 183.

³⁸⁴ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003, 313.

On Buller hills fair Freedom's sun may shine,
 But, ah, my mates, Blackball shall ever cast
 A shadow there!³⁸⁵

He returned to England in 1919 and the following year published his largely autobiographical novel, *The Road the Men Came Home*. He had spent a dozen years in New Zealand and only a quarter of them on the Coast, but, like Charles Thatcher fifty years earlier, he had celebrated and recorded a defining moment in Coast history, and he had done it in a form his peers understood and appreciated.

Hunter was the first to describe the fear and danger of underground mining, a fear fuelled by the reality of the Brunner mine disaster of 1896 and underlined by his dramatic (fictional) cave-in at the Cascade Mine³⁸⁶, and to identify the fact that, as with the goldminers a few years earlier, the bond between them was occupational rather than political or geographical, and that, like the goldminers but to a far greater extent than most of them, their lives as well as their livelihoods depended on mutual trust, competence, adherence to safety procedures and a willingness to watch each other's backs. As Billy Banjo says, "We miners are of a greater people than country, nation, Republic or Empire I belong to the miner people."³⁸⁷ In 1948, Bill Pearson spelled this out more pragmatically and with less rhetoric, explaining that "The mine is run like a lumbering, rather inefficient machine and the man who throws any part of it out of gear, earns the full force of the miners' scorn and abuse".³⁸⁸

The socialist thread running through the coalmining novels and plays continues in Runanga miner Jack Ewen's novel *Far From the Sun*, which was published three years after Pearson's *Coal Flat* and set in roughly the same era, although, like Pearson, Ewen freely admits to using historical events such as the 1947 Greymouth beer boycott out of context to build his story. Born and brought up in Runanga, Ewen left school at 15 and followed his father into the mine a year later. Too young to be part of the beer boycott, he has anecdotal knowledge, but the union meetings in his novel are drawn from experience and his endorsement of union attitudes is heartfelt. His pit boss earns respect because he was a rope boy at Blackball during the crib time strike of 1908, and when a long time

³⁸⁵ Hunter, 'Fair Freedom's Morn,' *Ballads of the Track* 42.

³⁸⁶ Hunter, *The Road* 46.

³⁸⁷ Hunter, *The Road* 136.

³⁸⁸ Pearson, Bill ('Peewee'), 'Pit Sense and Politics – and a Beer Boycott,' *Canta* XIX, no 4, 9 June 1948, 5.

unionist cannot agree with the beer boycott his decision to leave is perceived as the only honourable option. “I’ve never scabbed and I don’t intend to ... ” he tells the meeting, but “No bastard is going to tell me when I can have a drink and when I can’t.”³⁸⁹

The consequences might have come straight out of a Speights advertisement: “It was sad to see Kelly Briggs lower his hook and pack his bags after fifteen years.”³⁹⁰ The consequences for a pair of scabs who stay on, with the approval of the mine manager, who refuses to “stop their lamps”, are dire; the union formally ostracises them until one after the other they break under the pressure and leave the district. Ewen models the story on a real incident that happened at the Dobson mine, recounting how the union refused to share a railway carriage with the men, work with them or eat with them and arranged for the men’s landlady to give them notice so that they were forced to board at the pub. Unlike Pearson, who uses the divided loyalties of schoolteacher Paul Rogers to pose both sides of the issue, Ewen presents the unionists’ case in black and white terms. The men are reminded of the slogan above their picture hall – ‘United we stand, divided we fall’ – a clear message that the union is responsible for the progress and comforts they and their families enjoy. Ewen goes on to point out that the workingmen’s clubs which were established in many parts of New Zealand originated with the West Coast coal miners’ beer boycott. Ewen’s Majohn loses his way in life, sending his first lover away to have an abortion, then making a disastrous teenage ‘mixed marriage’ with a Catholic girl who gives up her opportunity to train as a nurse in Christchurch in favour of pregnancy and poverty in the fictitious coalmining town of Lindis. Majohn’s own brief foray over the hill to Canterbury, as an army recruit undergoing compulsory military training at Burnham camp, reinforces his anti-authoritarian attitudes. When the sergeant asks him for a song he sings the Red Flag, and in the ensuing discussion he says, “There’s only one class, that’s our class, the workers.”³⁹¹

In his 1986 play *Coaltown Blues*, Mervyn Thompson returns to the song forms of Billy Banjo to tell the same story of miners as freedom fighters and, ultimately, victims of larger political forces; on VJ Day in 1945 the children of Blacktown parade on coal trucks “greeting the town like the liberators of Prague”³⁹²; in the Big Strike of 1951 “It’s war,

³⁸⁹ Ewen, *Far From the Sun* 46.

³⁹⁰ Ewen, *Far From the Sun* 47.

³⁹¹ Ewen, *Far From the Sun* 79.

³⁹² Thompson, *Coaltown Blues* 21.

mate, and the people of Blacktown are the enemy.” For Thompson, however, like many Coasters of his generation, the conflict of is between past and future; ‘going down the pit’ is both a surrender to the codes of the community and an acknowledgement of belonging to it; in the play, as in real life, the schoolboys of the 1940s have wider options than their parents did but the writer is shaped by his West Coast experience, the performer concluding; “O Blacktown, Blacktown ... I grew up in you, and in your face ... I saw the face of the world.”³⁹³

There is nothing romantic about coal mining: “The pressure of rough stone walls is insensate; the darkness, the damp and barrenness are hostile to the aims and dreams of a race born to live in greenery under sun and stars”.³⁹⁴ Devanny writes of “those mountain tops of waste and clay and rock and bog”³⁹⁵; Holman of “Arthritis. Miner’s/ phthisis. A pit-prop under pressure”³⁹⁶; Thompson (who worked underground at Reefton for four and a half years) of “creakings, drippings, whirrings, falls, the scurrying of rats”.³⁹⁷ Pearson maintains that “resentment and spiritual atrophy are evident in any West Coast town that lives under the shadow of the pithead”³⁹⁸, and introduces *Coal Flat* through Miss Dane’s eyes; men with crib tins and towels around their necks, women swearing, untidy children with dirty legs³⁹⁹ reinforce his point that “There is an indifference to most moral values except fearlessness, intransigence and union loyalty”.⁴⁰⁰ Kim Eggleston writes that, “The bushed hills are heavy/ round the pitman’s shoulders”,⁴⁰¹ and the ever-present fear of rock fall or cave-in, expressed in the brown paper parcel of laying-out clothes kept by every miner’s wife in the 1890s⁴⁰², is still there in 1984 with Eggleston’s “Five big men in singlets/come knocking at the door”⁴⁰³.

In 1967 another major West Coast mine disaster occurred at Runanga, where 19 men were killed in an explosion in the Strongman Mine. Holman describes going into the

³⁹³ Thompson, *Coal Town Blues* 44.

³⁹⁴ Pearson, *Pit Sense*.

³⁹⁵ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 15.

³⁹⁶ Holman, *Late Great Blackball Bridge* 55.

³⁹⁷ Mervyn Thompson, *All My Lives*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1980, 41.

³⁹⁸ Pearson, *Pit Sense*.

³⁹⁹ Pearson, *Coal Flat* 54

⁴⁰⁰ Pearson, *Pit Sense*.

⁴⁰¹ Eggleston, ‘Dinnertime Blues’, *From the Face to the Bin* 15.

⁴⁰² Price, *Dancing in the Wilderness*.

⁴⁰³ Eggleston, ‘Five Big Men’, *From the Face to the Bin* 22.

mine years afterwards with his wife Theresa, whose stepfather was one of 19 miners who had died there, in ‘Inferno (Strongman Mine 1978)’⁴⁰⁴; that sense of betrayal Hunter wrote about in ‘Fair Freedom’s Morn’ returns almost a century later with the failure to rescue 29 miners trapped by an explosion in the Pike River coal mine,⁴⁰⁵ a failure that has cast an even larger shadow over the Coast. Hunter, Ewen, and Thompson especially write with authority about mining; each worked underground and knew the fear most starkly expressed in Holman’s poem, where “every creaking roofbeam dripped a cry”⁴⁰⁶. In 1993 another Coast coalminer, Kenneth J Hill, poses the question, “Who will speak on the miners’ behalf?”⁴⁰⁷ His conclusion appears to be an endorsement of Ewen’s novel as he repeats the phrase that has, since it was first published in 1966, also appeared on a West Coast gravestone.

...’twill be a man of words who tells of a life
seen in glimpses through faults in the seam.
Where dimly shines light from a carbide lamp
on a life seen complete, only –
far from the sun.

Wilderness: forest and bush

“Me and my billy don’t worry; / We take the track for the sea/ And there’s no hurry.”
– Denis Glover⁴⁰⁸

Timber was the last of the four extractive industries that shaped the Coast; references in the literature are predominantly conservationist in tone and, with the exceptions of *Bushman Burke*, *Dancing in the Wilderness* and *Run for the Trees*, poetic, celebrating the living forest or mourning its loss and sometimes both. Les Cleveland’s 1966 pictorial essay⁴⁰⁹ includes respectful images of working sawmillers, but in the text they are “butchering logs from the trampled carcase of the dying bush”, a position that reflects the beginnings of a

⁴⁰⁴ Holman, *As Big as a Father* 40.

⁴⁰⁵ On 19 November 2010 an explosion in the Pike River coal mine north of Greymouth resulted in the deaths of 29 miners: a year later their bodies had not been recovered.

⁴⁰⁶ Holman, *As Big as a Father* 40.

⁴⁰⁷ Hill, Kenneth, ‘Spokesman,’ *Aspects of Coal and Life* 22.

⁴⁰⁸ Glover, *Arawata Bill* 30.

⁴⁰⁹ Les Cleveland, *The Silent Land: A Pictorial Record of the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand*, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1966.

wider national conservation ethic. Like Devanny and Hooper, Cleveland acknowledges that bushmen working in the dangerous and isolated logging industry paradoxically gain a heightened awareness of the beauties of the forest; pioneer colonists driven by economics and a puritanical work ethic knew of no cultural or ecological prohibition against the destruction of the forest and the realisation of man as destroyer came late, recorded in poems such as Neil Simmons' 'My Tree' which laments the milling of a 600-year-old rimu tree.⁴¹⁰ Jean Devanny, writing on the fringes of the Coast in the 1920s, is alone in picturing the cleared farmland of the colonial dream⁴¹¹; although land was cleared for farming the primary purpose of bush felling on the Coast was the profitable sale of building timber which was mostly shipped elsewhere. The timber industry is now largely closed down on the Coast, where 87 percent of the land belongs to the Crown and is administered as conservation estate; the rise of eco-tourism is reflected in the publication of pictorial essays, of which Cleveland's was an early example, and the rugged Coast landscape, mythologized as 'untouched nature', is once again the subject of literary prose as well as poetry. This designation of forest and bush as treasured wilderness reinforces the last strands in the literature, personal freedom and individualism of spirit.

A defining moment in Coast history occurred in October 1941 when Koiterangi farmer Stanley Graham 'went bush' after shooting four policemen and an agriculture inspector. Police, soldiers, home guardsmen and volunteers were called in to find Graham, who returned to his home for supplies the following night and shot two home guardsmen. He was shot and injured but spent twelve nights on the loose before he was fatally wounded at Doughboy Creek. Two fictional treatments are included in the bibliography, although neither is set on the Coast; two significant works of non-fiction cover the facts⁴¹², two songs and a film add to the mythology and more than 60 years later the event is still cited, notably in a discussion of Gothic elements in the creative psyche of the South Island.⁴¹³ Like Joe Driscoll earlier, Graham earned respect for his marksmanship and bush survival skills and there was a degree of adulation and support for him from the rest of New Zealand, but little sympathy from his own community. He and his wife Dorothy were seen

⁴¹⁰ Davison, *Coastlines* 30.

⁴¹¹ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 277.

⁴¹² Rex Holliss, *Killer on the Coast : The True Story of Stan Graham*, Wellington: Denis Glover, 1959; H A Willis, *Manhunt*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1979 (re-released as *Bad Blood* to coincide with the film).

⁴¹³ Philip Matthews, 'The Dark Side,' *The Press*, 26 April 2008, D1.

as loners whose mental state had deteriorated, along with their finances and farm management practices, over several years. Poor milking shed hygiene had resulted in stock deaths and milk returned as unsaleable, Graham could not pay his bills and the crisis was precipitated by his refusal to hand over his rifle to police who were commandeering such weapons for Home Guard use.

The folk song, 'The Hero of The Coast', composed by local man Jim Case about 1943 and apparently widely sung, emphasised Graham's knowledge of the countryside and cast him as the underdog; "So pick up your guns Stan/Go it while you can,/The cops are all around you,/They're out to get their man..."⁴¹⁴ Folk singer Phil Garland later wrote and performed a more socially-acceptable version of the Stanley Graham story, admiring his legendary shooting and bushcraft skills and sympathising with his misfortune but concluding that, "Stan he was an outlaw and for that he had to pay/Though his skill in hunting might have served him well, elsewhere, /His memory will linger, for many long and bitter years."⁴¹⁵ That bitterness lives on in the community where, in 2004, a large and elaborate memorial was erected to Stanley Graham's seven victims; the language on the metal plaques is condemnatory and unforgiving, describing in detail "the unstable rampage of local farmer E S Graham who unleashed a fury which would permanently etch him in the annals of crime as the first mass murderer in New Zealand criminal history and subsequently the quarry in the country's largest and most terrifying manhunt." Unlike victims Constable Ted Best, Mr George Ridley, Home Guardsmen Max Coulson and others, Graham is referred to only by his surname with phrases such as "an irrational conniption", excitable and abusive" and "a callous half hour of madness and extortion".⁴¹⁶ It is significant that all three novels about the Graham shootings, not only the 1940s novels by Burdon and de Mauny but also the purportedly eye-witness account by Rex Hollis⁴¹⁷ published by Denis Glover eighteen years after the event, seek to explain Graham's predicament in economic and political terms, criticise the actions of those in authority and condemn the social attitudes of the day. The film *Bad Blood*, which came out of the non-

⁴¹⁴ 'The Hero of the Coast' by Jim S Case (air: The Yellow Rose of Texas and Mandrake), collected and published by Rona Bailey, *Shanties by the Way* 156.

⁴¹⁵ Garland, *The Singing Kiwi* 151.

⁴¹⁶ Koiterangi monument, sponsored by New Zealand Police, unveiled and dedicated 8 October 2004.

⁴¹⁷ Rex Holliss, *Killer on the Coast : The True Story of Stan Graham*, Wellington: Denis Glover, 1959.99

fiction account published in 1979, goes a step further by emphasising the erratic behaviour of Graham's wife.

To some extent 'going bush' has its origins in the wildness of the gold rushes, but there has traditionally been little respect for those who break moral codes; although goldfields bushrangers such as Burgess and Kelly feature in most of the historical Coast novels, notably in Price's *No Angel*, their murderous behaviour is consistently condemned. The Stanley Graham legend, however, has been fuelled by historical events in other parts of New Zealand; to admire renegades and runaways, especially when they successfully evade the authorities, is part of our national psyche. When wanted parole-breaker Bruce Stewart evaded police for 106 days in South Canterbury in early 2009 he joined a line of folk heroes including Joe Pawelka (imprisoned for burglary in 1910 and protected by Manawatu residents during three prison escapes) and Hawke's Bay car thief George Wilder who escaped three times and was on the run for a total of 237 days. In spite of police attempts to convince the general public that Bruce Stewart was a violent and undesirable criminal, there was a perceptible swell of admiration for his survival skills. George Wilder was the subject of a hit record by the Howard Morrison Quartet; while Bruce Stewart was on the loose, printed tee shirts celebrating his exploits were sold on the Internet.

Lawrence Jones⁴¹⁸ discusses the literary treatment of the Graham story in terms of three aspects of the Man Alone myth: man against nature, against society and against facets of his own psyche, and in that sense the story is "more the embodiment of a New Zealand myth"⁴¹⁹ than the story of an individual; nevertheless, elements of it recur in Coast literature. Butler's *Erewhon* is a man alone story; in Michael Brown's *The Idiot Played Rachmaninov* Colin Renwick sets up a rebellious West Coast community against the authorities; Charlie Douglas in Philip Temple's *The Explorer* epitomises man alone against the elements and in *The Bone People* Keri Hulme creates in Simon and Kerewin two extreme versions of the emotionally isolated, raw and intensely spiritual 'Coast character' battling internal demons. Each of the three characters in *The Bone People* has a period away by themselves, something Hulme sees as necessary for emotional development. "It's a matter of exploring who you are and what you really want to be, a matter of becoming

⁴¹⁸ Lawrence Jones, 'Stanley Graham and the several faces of Man Alone,' *Barbed Wire & Mirrors: Essays on New Zealand Prose*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987, 296-312.

⁴¹⁹ Jones 312.

truly adult,” Hulme says.⁴²⁰ For Hooper’s stag people, it is a rite of initiation, for many religions including Christianity there is a period of going into the wilderness; the rugged Coast landscape both offers and invites solitude.

In the original *Man Alone* story of 1939, Mulgan⁴²¹ pits his renegade character against the isolation and harshness of the New Zealand bush in order to explore his deep need for cause and community, and this physically strong and spiritually engaging social misfit emerges again and again in Coast literature, from Butler’s Higgs and Barry Crump’s characters to Hulme’s Kerewin and Andrew Grant’s Vietnam veteran Gray. Some, like Johnson and Gray, are soldiers uneasy with their post-war identities who find the challenges of the natural environment more engaging than civilian society, while others turn outlaw because of issues with authority. In *Far From The Sun* Majohn declares that if there was a war on he would ‘go bush’ on the Coast. “There’s something up there that gets you. The fresh, free mountain air sinking right into your lungs. The smell of a meal cooking over a wood fire. You can’t explain it. You’ve got to be there.”⁴²² Majohn’s attitude models that of union delegate Bernie O’Malley in *Coal Flat*, “arrested in 1915 for refusing military service; he and fellow Ministers had hidden for months in a cave in a sea-cliff on the other side of the Paparoas”⁴²³, and Robert Monteguoy Nelson, known as Joe Driscoll, an orphan who had been a child swagger in the central North Island before he found work at a South Westland bush camp. When war broke out in 1939 and Driscoll was called up he headed deep into the bush and, after a couple of captures and escapes when ill health forced him into civilisation again, successfully outwitted troops sent to arrest him and stayed at large until the end of the war. Unlike the First World War draft dodgers, however, he was not a pacifist but simply an independent spirit. “What I can’t stand is not being able to make a free choice, to be told that I have to go and take orders ... ”.⁴²⁴ His bushcraft feats became legendary. Attempts to capture him were discussed in some detail in the pubs up and down the Coast and the army, representing government authority, was the butt of the joke. Joe Driscoll was on the run for five years, during which he spent 61

⁴²⁰ Antonella Sarti, ‘Keri Hulme,’ *Spiritcarvers: Interviews with Eighteen Writers from New Zealand*, Vol. 31, Cross Cultures: Readings in the Post-Colonial Literatures in English, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, 64.

⁴²¹ John Mulgan, *Man Alone*, Hamilton: Paul’s Book Arcade, 1939.

⁴²² Ewen 79.

⁴²³ Pearson, *Coal Flat* 281.

⁴²⁴ Agnew 137.

days in the army, and when he was finally arrested after the war he served nine months at Paparoa Prison before returning to South Westland. The fact that the New Zealand Army paid their respects by carrying his coffin from Christchurch to his grave at Hokitika adds to his reputation as “the last of the bush characters”,⁴²⁵ although such a description is overworked in our culture. West Coaster Ivan Agnew’s biography *The Loner*, written towards the end of Driscoll’s life, is Driscoll’s own version of the story. The book borrows from other Coast legends; for example, recounting that in the wilds of Fiordland Driscoll found a notornis, a bird thought to be extinct; he shot it, cooked it and ate it. “I was hungry,” he explained. “It wasn’t much – too scrawny”⁴²⁶. His philosophy, summed up in *The Loner*, appears to have been shared by many on the Coast. “My crime was having an opinion of my own which didn’t coincide with that of the army and the laws of the country....I would do it all over again, because I can only live true to my own belief.”⁴²⁷

Driscoll’s escape to South Westland was echoed in John O’Shea’s film ‘Runaway’, released in 1964. Edgy young North Island rebel David Manning takes a downward path from bank clerk to labourer to murder suspect on the run through a series of morally-flawed decisions until finally, in an uncanny reminder of Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*, he heads into the Alps. “It starts driving across the plains to the mountains. You float across. Driving’s like dreaming You vanish into the dead, deserted world of Westland. A man can be swallowed by the bush.” Inevitably, Manning is pursued by police and he heads up into the mountains, climbing into the ice and snow. When Diana stops he goes on alone, climbing higher and higher towards his death. As the film ends, the camera pans back to show him as a man alone in the majesty of the Alps. Two years after ‘Runaway’, Joe Driscoll becomes ‘Jim Dougherty’ in Jack McClenaghan’s novel *Moving Target*, which also draws from Mulgan’s *Man Alone* and encompasses a slightly larger geographical area; while Driscoll spent most of his time south of Whataroa in South Westland, Dougherty has a gold claim in the hills behind Stillwater, north of Greymouth, although he goes further south when the army is after him. McClenaghan’s novel ends with Dougherty’s army protagonist dead and the fugitive badly wounded and holed up in a mountain cave where he chooses to end his own life rather than leaving the mountains he loved. McClenaghan wrote Driscoll’s

⁴²⁵ McClenaghan, Jack, Obituary in the *Christchurch Star*, quoted in the preface to *The Loner*.

⁴²⁶ Agnew 191.

⁴²⁷ Agnew 188.

obituary when he died at the age of 54, but it is in Agnew's book that Driscoll's feeling for the Coast was most eloquently expressed: "Here, a man is a law unto himself, with no out-of-bounds and no trespass notices."⁴²⁸

To choose death rather than loss of freedom is a commonly recurring theme in Coast fiction. Ewen's Majohn knows he will run out of air when he goes deeper into the toxic coalmine but he is fatalistic, deliberately choosing to die alongside his mates rather than face his personal failures without them. Andrew Grant's hard man Gray, who earlier fights to survive against the odds in Fiordland, returns there to die on his own terms. Grant's descriptions of Fiordland ring true, as do most of the others; John Pascoe's 1957 biography of South Westland explorer Charlie Douglas is an obvious and rich source for novelists. In 1988 Peter Hooper references Douglas's Soliloquy Letter of 1902-3⁴²⁹ and comments; "the time will come when New Zealand will possess a literature of wilderness experience, not simply of factual observation and record in learned journals – such writings already exist in abundance – but drawn from the essence of deep, personal experience."⁴³⁰ Men like Douglas, William O'Leary and Davey Gunn have become legendary wilderness dwellers, seldom mentioned by name but often recognisable in Coast fiction, as is 'Douglas Rock', a natural bivouac where "many a campfire had been lit, many a tired climber had taken his rest".⁴³¹ Peter Hooper says, "I think New Zealand needs the Coast in the same way that the world needs New Zealand. I think that in every human mind there's an unexplored wilderness."⁴³²

⁴²⁸ Agnew 118.

⁴²⁹ First published in John Pascoe (ed), *Mr Explorer Douglas*, Wellington: A H & A W Reed, 1956, 290-298.

⁴³⁰ Peter Hooper, '6 Feb 1988: Submission on Future Options for Former State Forests in South Westland South of the Cook River,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/035.

⁴³¹ Morton 28.

⁴³² Hooper, *Earth Marriage*.

Individualism of spirit.

“...[I] am an individualist, and I know individuals will always rule, no matter what the society.”⁴³³ – *Lola Ridge*

Coasters are reputedly tolerant of each other and comfortable in their skins, valuing personal dignity and respect for individual rights above political and financial advancement. Poet, feminist and political activist Lola Ridge, who was brought up and married on the Coast but reinvented herself by consistently denying her origins and claiming to be Australian, was perhaps reacting to the straitjacket of post-colonial sentimentality clogging the country at the start of the 20th century.

In referring to the anti-myth explored by Allen Curnow and other New Zealand writers in the 1930s and early 1940s, Lawrence Jones identifies spiritual, physical, economic, historical, post-colonial, ethnic (revisionist) and cultural dimensions, prominent among them the response to the myth of New Zealand as ‘privileged happyland’.⁴³⁴ Few if any of the conditions so mythologized by post-colonial writers have ever had any relevance to the Coast; the Just City and Pastoral Paradise debunked by the likes of Curnow, Sargeson, Frame and Glover were neither perceptions nor aspirations of the itinerant milling and mining families, and the few significant women writers on the Coast (Ridge, Devanny, Eggleston, Hulme) have seen no place for sentiment or sexism. Nor was the Coast ever ‘a land of settlers with never a soul at home’ – unlike Curnow’s cowman⁴³⁵ there is no sense of unease in O’Regan, Smith or Hooper, whose *Our Forests, Ourselves* remains one of the more significant evaluations of man’s relationship to the land. A key element in this dissociation of Coasters and the land is ownership; without the capitalist base of farm, run and even smallholding having significant value, there is little to ‘write home’ about. The one anti-myth with any relationship to the Coast and Coast literature is the critical analysis of puritanism, or, to quote Sargeson, New Zealand’s ‘own particular variety of puritanism’.⁴³⁶ In “Fretful Sleepers”, Bill Pearson describes New Zealand as “the most

⁴³³ Lola Ridge in a letter to her husband, 1923, quoted in Nancy Berke, *Women Poets on the Left: Lola Ridge, Genevieve Taggard, Margaret Walker*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001, 53.

⁴³⁴ Lawrence Jones, *Picking up the Traces*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003, 173-175.

⁴³⁵ Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 185.

⁴³⁶ Sargeson, Frank, ‘Writing a Novel’, quoted in Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 223.

puritan country in the world”⁴³⁷ – his upbringing made him at once an onlooker to the fervent Catholicism of the Coast and an unwilling participant in its cultural demise, as was Thompson whose *Coaltown Blues* records, “The hot war over, the cold one began.”⁴³⁸ Pearson, Thompson, Holman and Hawes, whose 2009 play *The Gods of Warm Beer* covers the same era, explore the darker secrets of the coalmining towns in the 1950s and the poverty, repression and despair behind many closed doors. “Saddest of all,” Thompson records, “Angelino relinquishes his name”,⁴³⁹ a clear message that the tolerant and egalitarian code of the Coast has crumbled in the face of puritan New Zealand.

To an outsider such as Theo Schoon, who tried to engage with Hokitika locals in 1970, “... the West Coast is a place where most people feel they cannot find out the truth about anything, for in its clear blue skies and clean air floats a heavy pall of deception and suspicion”.⁴⁴⁰ This darker side of Coast society, first evidenced in Lola Ridge’s work and in the Stanley Graham novels, is further explored in the more recent poetry of Eggleston, Donovan, Holman and, notably, in Alison Sanson’s poem ‘Unwelcome Arrivals’⁴⁴¹ which evokes the American ‘wild west’ - “Grandfather, riding with his brothers/Into sleeping Doylestown” - to convey the helplessness of women trapped in bad marriages and unwanted pregnancies. The psychiatric institution of Seaview⁴⁴², on the outskirts of Hokitika since the 1870s, has been an influence in the literature too, specifically in poems by Holman and Donovan and in Kelly’s *A Secret Mind*. Themes of physical violence and cultural poverty are taken up in short stories by Hooper, Pearson, Hulme and, more recently, Victoria Cleal, whose ‘Westland’⁴⁴³ is a black story of despair and defeat, told through the eyes of a child whose father takes him into the South Westland bush intending to kill them both until, in an unexplained time shift, a stranger from the past intervenes. Cleal uses a historic trail and an old grave site to draw a parallel between the frustrated lives of the contemporary dope-smoking unemployed father and the gold diggers of the 1860s, but once again it is the uncomprehending child who finds a way back.

⁴³⁷ Pearson, *Fretful Sleepers* 10.

⁴³⁸ Thompson, *Coaltown Blues* 28.

⁴³⁹ Thompson, *Coaltown Blues* 29.

⁴⁴⁰ Schoon 56.

⁴⁴¹ Hooper, *A Pleasure of Friends* 9.

⁴⁴² C P Townsend, *Misery Hill: Seaview Terrace, Hokitika, 1866-1909*, Greymouth: Patricia Townsend, 1998.

⁴⁴³ Victoria Cleal, ‘Westland’, *Sport* 25 (2000), 30-38.

The arrival of Barry Crump on the Coast, however, brought humour back to the fore. Crump liked the Coast, which he saw as “one of the last living vestiges of old NZ”,⁴⁴⁴ and quickly became an adopted son because, as his wife Maggie explains, “he had a West Coast attitude about him anyway”.⁴⁴⁵ Crump’s characters were no longer Irish, but they were instantly recognisable as the larger-than-life Coast characters of the previous century, still having the last laugh over magistrates, policemen, wardens and fisheries officers. Crump himself features in the history of Coast policing⁴⁴⁶ – along with a group of dubious characters called Nobbie, Stretch, Bonehead and Evil Toad, he was questioned in 1978 about a suspected arson in South Westland, but no charges were brought – and there are recognisable real life events in his yarns as well as those of Leslie Hobbs, Russell Anderson, John Dawson and David Henshaw.

Police officers on the Coast did have their houses blown up by explosives on more than one occasion;⁴⁴⁷ in 1957, the police force was the biggest employer in Greymouth; civilians did successfully impersonate detectives, over-officious officers were regularly moved on (one was thrown off the Taramakau bridge) and the silent war against six-o’clock closing, seen by most Coasters as a game, was waged for many decades. Coasters traditionally consider that licensing laws do not apply to their region; in 1925 *Truth* reported that police brought more cases to court in Greymouth than anywhere else in New Zealand and secured the least number of convictions: “It is safe to say that there is more perjury committed in the witness box at Greymouth than in any similar spot in the Dominion”.⁴⁴⁸ In 1954 there was a Commission of Enquiry into the laxity of police on the Coast; it sparked a plethora of jokes and cartoons, the findings were inconclusive, and the police commissioner voluntarily resigned. Not surprisingly, most of the published yarns involve the illicit consumption of alcohol and many feature lawyers and judges who side with the drinkers; the next favourite victims are traffic officers, game wardens and fisheries inspectors who interfere with the opportunistic and resourceful hunter-gathering fraternity.

⁴⁴⁴ Barry Crump and Colin Hogg, *Back Down the Track*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1998, 61.

⁴⁴⁵ Crump, *Back Down the Track* 61.

⁴⁴⁶ Kit Carson, Yvonne Davison and New Zealand Police, *The Longest Beat*, Greymouth: P.M. Deazley and the New Zealand Police, 1990.

⁴⁴⁷ Carson 65. On 5 October 1932 Inspector Charles Lopdell, sent to Coast to enforce the Licensing Act, had a bomb landed on the roof of his house; in subsequent months three others followed and in 1934 he was posted out of the district.

⁴⁴⁸ *Truth* newspaper 6 June 1925, quoted in Carson.

Dawson and Henshaw's 'The Poacher' is the best example of the genre; when Mick Fitzpatrick tries to gelignite trout in the Grey River he misjudges his throw, losing an arm, an eye and his hearing, but to the disgust of the locals he is charged anyway so the lawyer pleads provocation – "The accused has a vegetable garden near the river concerned, and at night the trout were slithering through the grass and eating his lettuces".⁴⁴⁹ (The judge dismisses the case and the ranger is transferred out of the district.) Peter Hawes uses the same plot in *The Dream of Nikau Jam* when the judge goes to some lengths to observe the letter of the law, satisfy his own conscience, and dismiss the case against Feeffi and his girlfriend. Such stories recall the natural exuberance of Coast humour, starting with Thatcher on the goldfields, which celebrates freedom of spirit; it appears in gentler form in many of the poems in *Blackball Beckons* and is most obvious in Barry Crump's many Coast-based short stories: sleeping out by a driftwood fire in Westland, Crump says "Wouldn't be dead for quids!"⁴⁵⁰

Interestingly, the reputation of Coasters for tolerance and fair play has from time to time worked for individual officers who understand that Coasters prefer to be asked, not told. In 1954 one of the first female police officers, Constable Roa Morrissey, was sent to the Coast as punishment because she refused to cook for the male constables; she was married to a sergeant in Canterbury and it was hoped the enforced separation would prompt her resignation from the force, but the Greymouth Pensioners' Association took up her cause, organised a petition, involved the prime minister and had her posted back to Christchurch.⁴⁵¹ Coasters also stood up for a young Borstal escapee who was hunted by police dogs, proclaiming the practice degrading and inhumane (he was successfully sheltered by his family), and when the 1981 Springbok team toured they and their police escorts were given unofficial time out on the Coast – with only one confrontation – not because the Coasters approved of apartheid but because they disapproved of harassment.⁴⁵² There's also a question of pride; when feelings ran high in 2000 over the government's decision to stop logging in West Coast beech forests, Prime Minister Helen Clark was widely quoted as saying some pro-logging Coasters could be "fairly feral" and comparing

⁴⁴⁹ Dawson 12-13.

⁴⁵⁰ Barry Crump and Mandy Herron, 'State Highway 6', *Barry Crump's Bedtime Yarns: A Collection of Short Stories and Poems*, Auckland: Barry Crump Associates, 1988, 107.

⁴⁵¹ Carson 104.

⁴⁵² Carson 136.

their stance to a “lynch mob mentality” once common in Kentucky, USA;⁴⁵³ her stance was widely resented on the Coast and specifically referenced in books by Paul Maunder⁴⁵⁴, Paddy Sweeney and Denise Tilling⁴⁵⁵.

Peter Hawes’ exuberant Westport adolescent Royce Rowland is a direct successor to Crump’s Fred and Artie, with the same brand of optimistic, opportunist and slightly mad hedonism; in the best traditions of Coast characters he is work-shy, cunning, innovative, intensely curious, and not impressed by authority; when he and his crewmates land the first bluefin tuna ever caught off Westport they instinctively hide it from the police. Hawes pokes fun at Butler by launching Royce down the river in a bright yellow inflated survival suit, stolen from a visiting Catalina seaplane, at a place called Utopia, invokes the ‘Shakespeare Joe’ of the goldfields by having Royce mutter lines from ‘The Ancient Mariner’ now and then, and writes convincingly of the West Coast fishing industry, which gets few mentions in its literature.

Rowland, albeit an older version, is an example of the ‘wild child’ prevalent in Coast literature, a more recent manifestation of the ‘man alone’ figure; the cross-over is clearly seen in Grant Hindin Miller’s 12-year-old Carey,⁴⁵⁶ left to live with his aunt and uncle at Runanga while his father is in Auckland looking for work during the 1920s depression. Unhappy at home and at school, Carey jumps a freight train for Canterbury and makes his way north in company with a man on the run, learning to scavenge for food, run from the police and sleep out in the ‘starlight hotel’ in company with other swaggers (the ‘Dream monger’ of the title is a mysterious tramp called The Spooner who turns up when they need him most). Although only partly set on the Coast, the book is relevant because, although the two fugitives look out for each other, Carey makes his own decisions, deals with his own emotions and is treated like an adult.

The ‘wild child’ of the Coast is often wise beyond his or her years, usually physically beautiful but mentally flawed and scarred, always independent and spiritually alone. Rose and Simon are thieves and liars who spy on others, like to have secrets and

⁴⁵³ No transcript has been found of the original remarks, reputedly made on a talkback radio show April 13, 2000, but a protest by Coast Action Network (CAN) chairman Barry Nicolle was reported by NZPA (Greymouth, 14 April, 2000), and on 3 May the Dominion Post ran an NZPA story with the headline CLARK REFUSES TO APOLOGISE OVER FERAL COMMENTS.

⁴⁵⁴ Maunder, ‘Pleasing the Prime Minister’, *Blackball* 03, 33.

⁴⁵⁵ Denise Tilling, *The West Coast Has No Feral*, Christchurch: Denise Tilling, 2003.

⁴⁵⁶ Miller, Grant Hindin. *The Dream Monger*. Auckland [N.Z.]: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985

move in the dark; like weka, they are attracted to glittering treasures, whether trinkets or money, and keep them hidden. Both are abused by adults but they are pragmatic survivors who try to deal with it themselves. That they engage the sympathy of others is explained by Trenton Batson and Eugene Bergman, authors of an anthology of deaf characters in literature⁴⁵⁷, who point out that physically-flawed characters are inevitably superior in some other way to compensate. Thus differences are idealised (black people have more soul, deaf people are more sensitive) and characters are often given moral virtue, physical beauty or, in the case of Rose and Rosa, mathematical and musical talents. Hawes' intellectually-challenged Feeffi has a wonderful singing voice, as does Patrick's Rose. To be isolated from a society is to be free of its corruption and to be isolated from a family is to be free from the more mundane aspects of everyday life, so the wild child who doesn't quite belong is elevated to a more interesting plane and plays a useful role in emphasising the main themes of Coast writing. Randall's Halfie and Patrick's Rose are wary of the adults around them; submitting to the authority of those they respect and finding security in such relationships, but they actively try to manipulate and control others. They are runaways, free spirits whose communication systems are different and for whom the natural environment holds less danger than the social one, and they come and go with an enviable freedom. They invariably act as catalysts for adult behaviours and events; Simon brings Joe and Kerewin together, Rose inspires Bella to become her teacher, Halfie brings Gertie back to health, Kelly's Libby finds a murderer and Brown's Rosa starts a riot by playing the piano.

There are no handouts on the Coast; each person must extract their own truths. Kerewin in *The Bone People* has had to acquire and assemble her own collection of pounamu and other precious objects and give them her own mana, and, in a central theme of *Denniston Rose*, Jimmy Cork tells the little girl Rose that she must find her own treasure. But it is there to find; Noleen Hood's 1991 poem records "...the heedless hands/of a Coaster's child/...laughing at the glitter/of mica in the sun.../winking infinitesimal/diamonds of promise".⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ Trenton W Batson and Eugene Bergman, *Angels and Outcasts: An Anthology of Deaf Characters in Literature*, Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet College Press, 1985.

⁴⁵⁸ Hood 49.

FIVE COAST WRITERS:

This final section identifies five writers who have significant bodies of work with the Coast as their setting. Although others such as Bill Pearson and Jenny Pattrick have written West Coast books with wider appeal and greater commercial impact, and other Coasters such as Pearson, Mervyn Thompson and Philip Ross May have achieved status in the literary world, these five are of interest not only because they have used the Coast as the canvas for their work but also because they have used it as background for larger and more universal stories and themes. There are both commonalities and differences between them; only Hawes and Devanny were born on the Coast, although all except Hulme were brought up there; the latter four attended the University of Canterbury at various stages in their lives (not surprisingly, as the Coast falls within its catchment); each was born to 'blue collar' working class families but each made the deliberate and uncommon choice, early in their lives, to prioritise their writing activities. Hulme, Holman and Hawes were all born in the same year, 1947, and share experiences and influences common to their generation which shaped their work in very different ways.

Jean Devanny: 1894-1962

A feminist socialist, Jean Devanny was the first woman to write significant West Coast fiction; three of her seven New Zealand novels and seven of her collected short stories were set in the coalmining and timber towns of the West Coast and informed by the political and social attitudes of these communities. She was born Jane Crook at Ferntown near Collingwood, the eighth in a family of ten children; her parents William and Jane (née Appleyard) were rural householders whose small farm provided for their own needs while her father (a boilermaker and miner) and her brothers worked elsewhere for wages, and she left school at 13 to take over the housework and care for her parents and siblings. She worked intermittently in Collingwood as a live-in housemaid until the family moved to the coalmining town of Puponga in 1908, and three years later she married Hal Devanny, who became secretary of the Puponga Miners' Union; both became politically active socialists and their first child, born during the Waihi goldminers' strike, was named after Karl Marx. By 1913 her parents and older siblings had moved to Auckland, and in 1917, when the

main No 1 Mine at Puponga was closed down and the men paid off, the Devannys moved with their three children to Fairfield, a coalmining town near Dunedin, and from there to Wellington where Jean ran a boarding house until, in 1929, they moved to Sydney.

Devanny's experience was unlike that of most other women writing in New Zealand in the 1920s; she was a working class woman with a rudimentary education influenced largely by international socialist ideals and with little exposure to the genteel settler behaviours prevalent in places like Canterbury. Her neighbours were itinerant labourers from Britain, Australia and America, and her own work was housekeeping – for her family, for wages at a hotel and boarding house, for her husband and children, as a boarding house keeper in Wellington and a cook in outback Australia – interspersed with the work of piano playing, writing and political proselytising. These latter three tasks were equally practical; each was learned, worked at and charged for, and Devanny's eventual grievances with the Communist Party in Australia were in no small part because she was not adequately supported and provided for while she worked at her job of public speaking. From the 1940s she played an active role in Australian literary organisations and wrote novels and travel articles about North Queensland, where she spent her last 20 years before dying of chronic leukaemia.

The western Golden Bay settlements of Puponga ('Paranga') and Paturau ('Patarau'), the settings for three of her novels, are at the extreme northern end of the West Coast and not directly connected by road, but there was frequent social interchange between the coalmining communities whose social, industrial and geographical characteristics were worlds apart from the predominantly farming communities of the rest of Golden Bay.⁴⁵⁹ Jane Crook found herself at odds with the Ferntown settler community where she was born because she and her family were different; her father was an alcoholic whose poor social graces and occasional lapses from sobriety made him an outsider, her mother was a weak woman who didn't manage housework or money well, and several of her siblings were free thinkers with strong personalities and an active disregard for the social conventions of their neighbours. *Bushman Burke* draws on her personal experience as the family firewood gatherer; an outdoor person comfortable in the bush, she was

⁴⁵⁹ Formerly Murderers Bay/Massacre Bay/Coal Bay, the district was invaded by Ngati Toa and Te Atiawa in the 1820s, settled by Europeans under the Wakefield scheme in the 1840s and rushed by goldminers in 1858.

physically strong and used a horse-drawn sled to haul small trees and branches she had cut down; she could harness and drive horses and ‘doctor’ injured animals, and would intervene when they were treated cruelly.⁴⁶⁰ She was rebuked by others in the community for befriending a promiscuous schoolteacher (whose character informs Biddy Fane in *Dawn Beloved*), for declaring herself, at the age of twelve, against religion and for wearing a red ribbon in her hat on a Sunday, but to her such criticism was despicable, as were the codes of silence and complicity that protected men who abused their families. When a neighbouring woman, regularly beaten by her husband, was shut out of doors of a stormy night Jane’s mother praised her for not complaining or running to the neighbours, calling her a ‘good woman’, but Jane, who changed her name to Jean after this incident, could not see where the goodness lay. “Deep in me there developed a hatred for this woman, and for other women like her – women who never complained!”⁴⁶¹ That incident stayed in her mind and reappeared in *Poor Swine*.⁴⁶²

Dawn Beloved tells many of Jean’s own stories, but she removed from the novel the bitterness and disgust she felt for her father’s alcoholism and her mother’s ineptitude, describing them with some compassion as “this poor woman and her vulgar man”⁴⁶³ and conceding they might have an inarticulate appreciation of finer things. The novel bears close similarities to Miles Franklin’s *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*⁴⁶⁴, whose character Dawn was named in the same way and whose career also involved an affectionate brother, a wise mentor and a political awakening; Devanny and Franklin held similar beliefs and later became close friends. Reading was young Jane’s salvation from an unsatisfactory home life, books were “the only real jewel-cases”⁴⁶⁵, essential to Dawn’s world, and the people who bought her books were the really important people in her life. British socialist Robert Blatchford’s *God and My Neighbour* gave her a “misty and inchoate radicalism”⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁰ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 33.

⁴⁶¹ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 27.

⁴⁶² Devanny, *Poor Swine* 24.

⁴⁶³ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 12.

⁴⁶⁴ Miles Franklin, *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, New York: Penguin/Virago Press, 1987 (First published 1909).

⁴⁶⁵ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 71.

⁴⁶⁶ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 49.

reinforced by the Reads, Puponga neighbours who had been among the 200 ‘Clarion Settlers’⁴⁶⁷, Fabians who came from England to found the New Zealand Socialist Party.

The Reads had personally known famous socialists such as Robert Blatchford, Eleanor Marx, George Bernard Shaw and William Morris, and Devanny was thrilled with the stories they told, the books they lent and the ideas they held. Socialism inspired Devanny, as it inspired many miners, and the political climate of the coal mining towns was a crucible for her emotional and creative development. Puponga had a community hall, built by the miners’ union and used for dances and meetings, and Jean taught herself to prepare and deliver rousing speeches there. She was encouraged by Paddy Webb, Member of Parliament for Grey, who also stayed with the Devannys and for whom their daughter Patricia was named.

At Puponga the Australian miners soon drifted away and British miners, the ‘Pommies’ and ‘Geordies’⁴⁶⁸ with their “unintelligible dialects and dirty habits”⁴⁶⁹, predominated; Devanny noted in particular that the Durham miners lacked “that spirit of militant trade unionism which, with the majority of New Zealand miners, was basic principle.” The English miners’ wives also drank beer rather than tea, which marked them to the other miners’ wives as socially inferior. Devanny’s first published writing was a tentative letter in the *Maoriland Worker* suggesting meatier content for the women’s column ‘Hearth and Home’, which interspersed topics like sex education with household hints and recipes. Influenced by writers such as British feminist campaigner Dora B Montefiore, who was working in Australia in 1911 and whose opinions regularly featured in the *Maoriland Worker*, Devanny understood that for socialism to succeed women had to be educated and empowered alongside their men, and her New Zealand novels have a

⁴⁶⁷ The ‘Clarion Settlers’ or ‘Clarionettes’ were a group of British socialists who gathered under the banner of Robert Blatchford’s newspaper *The Clarion* and emigrated to New Zealand in 1900 to set up a cooperative farming community. Led by William Ranstead, they initially established themselves in Christchurch and on the Coast. Kathryn Peacocke. ‘Ranstead, William – Biography’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10, URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3r3/1>.

⁴⁶⁸ As late as the 1970s the site of a single men’s boarding house at Puponga, long since demolished, was known locally as “the Geordie pa” because of the wild and uncouth habits of the miners, predominantly from the north-east of England, who once lived there.

⁴⁶⁹ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 55.

strongly feminist agenda. In *The Butcher Shop*⁴⁷⁰ she advanced the premise that women were valued no more than stock; that like the sheep on a Hawke's Bay station they were owned, branded and slaughtered at their owners' whim, and their fate was biologically determined in the sense that society expected a women to sell herself to the highest bidder and increase his property value by bearing him children. Her descriptions of the sheep station were based on visits to the Hawke's Bay station where her sister Annie was the manager's wife, observations she also made use of in *Lenore Divine*. In her Coast novels she deals with a different class of people; miners were not property owners, they lived in small and often squalid communities and she likened them to pigs, actually more intelligent than sheep but less attractive, less romantic and much coarser. In *Dawn Beloved*, her pregnant character finds herself scratching for coal, firewood and basic comforts "as though she were little better than a sow"⁴⁷¹. Dawn associates the allusion with her husband's attitudes and tells Mrs Taylor, "I heard Val say once that the workers are just swine."⁴⁷² And when her first child arrives, she sees him as "a contented little pig"⁴⁷³

Although Dawn (and Lilian in *Poor Swine*) are of the same class as the other miners' wives they see themselves as intellectually superior, and Miette in *The Butcher Shop* is another variation on the gossiping, simple and petty-minded women Devanny despised, although Margaret Messenger grits her teeth and behaves like a good socialist when she realises Miette can teach her political awareness. The sixpenny novels by Charles Garvice, Nat Gould and Zane Grey, Australian, British and American writers Devanny had read so avidly in her childhood, are now spurned by Dawn and Lilian, who borrow 'worthwhile' books from those they look up to. When Lilian is accused of 'putting on airs' over her friendship with Doctor Stallard she replies, "Why not? I am of his kind".⁴⁷⁴ Devanny's central characters are invariably better mothers than the other miners' wives and far more enlightened in their attitudes to children's education, although they are open to learning housekeeping and management skills, and Devanny blatantly lectures on behavioural standards, healthy food and hygiene. She is one of the first New Zealand novelists to write

⁴⁷⁰ Devanny, Jean, *The Butcher Shop*, London: Duckworth, 1926 (republished Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1981).

⁴⁷¹ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 196.

⁴⁷² Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 205.

⁴⁷³ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 209.

⁴⁷⁴ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 70.

about childbirth, abortion and contraception; her own childbirth experience revealed to her that women helped each other in adversity even though they were politically at odds, and that childbearing and rearing were tasks that overrode personality issues, but she firmly believed children would be better brought up by the state than left to haphazard parenting. Motherhood was important to her and valued by her; unusually for the 1920s she made married women who were mothers, and often older women, important characters in both her short stories and her novels, while her most self-centred and morally-flawed woman characters (Biddy Fane in *Dawn Beloved*, Miette Longstair in *The Butcher Shop* and Flora Burke in *Bushman Burke*) are childless by choice.

Lynley Cvitanovich identifies Devanny as one of the first in New Zealand to begin grappling with these kinds of feminist issues, but argues that her understanding was limited and uninformed. “She knew and felt that women were oppressed in a different way from men, but she didn’t have the means to translate those feelings into a theory.”⁴⁷⁵ That may be true of her first work, but she was a keen student and her political development can be traced through her writing. With each successive book she refines her arguments, frequently using her short stories to explore a different point of view or another consequence. Her interest in a Marxist materialist conception of history resulted in an ambitious project she called *Evolution of the Sexlife according to the Materialist Conception of History*.⁴⁷⁶ Her first two novels were already in print when she began studying each significant socialist writer on the subject of sex, marriage and property and realised that, “The institution of one man/one woman marriage was the inevitable and logical result of settled conditions and increase of population”.⁴⁷⁷ The supposition that women were less polygamously inclined than man was ridiculous, she concluded, but women were restrained because they were not economically equal. She develops the theme in *Poor Swine*, whose title refers to Lilian and other young mothers at Denniston and Millerton. As in *Dawn Beloved*, the motif is reiterated; by Julian Greville when he realises Lilian is pregnant to a coalminer (“The swine.”⁴⁷⁸) and then about Lilian’s fate as a miner’s

⁴⁷⁵Lynley Cvitanovich, *Breaking the Silence : An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Woman Writers*, Palmerston North: New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group in association with the Dept of Sociology Massey University, 1985.

⁴⁷⁶Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 97.

⁴⁷⁷Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 98.

⁴⁷⁸Devanny, *Poor Swine* 30.

wife (“Poor little swine”⁴⁷⁹). *Poor Swine* was written in ten days on the deck of the passenger liner as it steamed across the Indian Ocean en route to Germany as she headed for an international Communist Party conference. Devanny never lived at Denniston, although she and Hal were frequent visitors to the northern end of the Coast and had friends who had worked there; she relied on their stories and on memories of Puponga and Fairfield for the local colour of the mining community. Writing at a time when her head and heart were full of Marxist ideology, she looked forward to the revolution she believed was imminent, and, like Lilian, sought spiritual freedom, “a reality as nearly approaching the ideal as it is good for souls to be blest with.”⁴⁸⁰

Although she and Hal did not join the Communist Party until they moved to Australia in 1929, her involvement began a few years earlier. The New Zealand Communist Party was founded in Wellington in 1921 out of a Marxist study group led by George Winter. He and Devanny became friends and shared an interest in anthropological sociology; quite independently of each other, both had begun studying and writing about Maori social structures and intellectual and cultural development, in Marxist terms. George Winter had emigrated with his family from Wales, where his father had been a tanner, and the family lived in physical and social isolation at Awaroa, an inlet on the coast between Collingwood and Nelson.⁴⁸¹ George’s upbringing was not unlike Jean’s; both came from large families who were homestead farmers (although neither family was particularly good at farming); both had older siblings who were widely read, intellectually active and unconventional in their attitudes. Another point of interest is that both had first-hand experience of the Puponga community; at 18 George Winter became the first schoolteacher at Puponga and taught there for two terms in 1905 before moving to Wellington and later Australia, where he became a Trade Union administrator. He was gone by the time the Devanny family moved to Puponga and there is no evidence that he and Jean met there but George would have known her brother Charlie (Ralph in *Dawn Beloved*) who worked in the coal mine and organised the Puponga miners’ union.

⁴⁷⁹ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 102.

⁴⁸⁰ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 271.

⁴⁸¹ Carol Dawber and Lynette Wilson, *Awaroa Legacy : The Story of the Hadfield Family*, Picton: River Press, 1999.

It has been argued that Devanny's feminism is radical for its time in that she wanted female labour acknowledged and valued,⁴⁸² but this interpretation seems somewhat broad. The women in her novels generally make light of their household chores, as Devanny herself did once she became a miner's wife; their households are basic, their clothing and possessions limited and their food purchased as needed from the local stores; they have time on their hands and suffer from loneliness, boredom and intellectual poverty rather than overwork; it is their emotions, opinions and right to share their husbands' incomes they want recognised and valued. When Dawn Devoy struggles to manage household chores during her pregnancy and denies herself food in order to satisfy her husband's appetite, his selfishness and lack of awareness make her angry and she is ashamed when others in the village notice it; she sees his behaviour as the ultimate hypocrisy from a socialist. For Devanny, the issue for women is equality of personal status, an intellectual recognition that existed in the socialist literature and rhetoric rather than in the everyday lives of the miners, and she associates that to a large extent with sexual equality, signposting the secondary status of the miners' wives by calling them 'Mrs' with no first names. Their fate is dulled sensibilities, "a long succession of nights in tiny kitchens"⁴⁸³; but instead Dawn "began to look out from her pigeon-hole, as it were, and spy into the far places of the earth."⁴⁸⁴

That Val Devoy is largely silent and uncommunicative reflects not only Devanny's experience with her own husband but also the larger issue of communication as a tool of the oppressor. Dawn wants Val to notice, to see and to offer, but is made powerless by his blindness and silence; she is willing to discuss her needs and argue for their shared goals but is cut out of the decision-making process and forced to manage her own workload, and when help is offered on her terms, in the form of her friend Gavin Fuller, it is curtly rejected because ownership of their situation must remain with Val and not his wife. Devanny uses Devoy's behaviour to illustrate the marginalisation of women, who in her view were oppressed and repressed by sexual politics in the same way that colonised races were repressed by the colonisers. In *Poor Swine* she uses a much cruder analogy when she describes the opening of the coke ovens at Granity in phallic terms, the hydraulic ram a

⁴⁸² Cvitanovich 16.

⁴⁸³ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 239.

⁴⁸⁴ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 238.

symbol of man's power over nature in "the invincible approach of its bluish great head to the foe it was made to crush..."⁴⁸⁵

Devanny's West Coast work primarily concerns the most fundamental of property politics; the issue of a woman's freedom not only to choose her sexual partners but to place an economic value on her services. There was no other job available to a miner's wife and her only source of income was her husband's pay, leaving her and her children dependent on the man in the family unless she chose, as Lilian Sweet and others do, to sell her favours to the single men in the community. Devanny writes convincingly about contemporary social reality and the psychological and economic pressures facing women; pressures known and discussed by readers of *The Maoriland Worker* which in 1911 published a cartoon from the USA showing a young woman drowning in a sea of poverty, oppression and overwork, pushed down by 'the strong arm of Starvation', reaching out for a lifebuoy labelled 'Prostitution'.⁴⁸⁶ One of Edward Hunter's more interesting poems, 'The Slut',⁴⁸⁷ addresses the same issue; telling of a "once winsome and beautiful maiden" who now plies her trade by the city light but still calls "...for the day of the Free", a rallying call that Hunter echoes when he calls socialists "...to the Barricade...For the sake of 'The Slut' and the Day that is ours?"

In Devanny's short story 'Her Big Idea' Mrs Jocelyn goes to a dance at the miners' hall expressly to find a man who will pay her for sex so she can feed and clothe her children, because her husband isn't earning enough. When the man she has chosen offers his pay packet out of compassion she behaves 'morally and honestly', saying, "Nothing for nothing. I give or I won't take."⁴⁸⁸ She is unable to transact the same deal with her husband, however, as he refuses to pay her for sex and threatens to take the children if she reneges on her 'obligations', pointing up the real position of women and children as property. Devanny's protagonists have their own strong sense of morality; they target only single men and are highly critical of those who predate on other women's husbands, making the point that personal and sexual freedom is inherently neither dishonest nor promiscuous. Although moral standards might be 'different' in the coalmining

⁴⁸⁵ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 19.

⁴⁸⁶ 'Her Last Resort', *Maoriland Worker*, 4 August 1911, reproduced from *The Emancipator* (USA).

⁴⁸⁷ Hunter, *Ballads of the Track* 34.

⁴⁸⁸ Devanny, 'Her Big Idea,' *Old Savage and Other Stories* 285.

communities, Devanny looked back “with hatred” on the puritanical code of the farmers she grew up among, where a fall from grace meant social ostracism and family persecution, the “carefully preserved ignorance of the victim on sex problems being in no way considered a mitigating factor”⁴⁸⁹. As Sue Carter points out⁴⁹⁰, Devanny sets up her women characters to make readers consider aspects of power ratio and the nature of female sexuality, using them as “vehicles of a dialogue about female rights to sexual choice”. The choice of promiscuity, explored particularly through Biddy Fane in *Dawn Beloved* and Lilian Sweet in *Poor Swine*, is not an easy argument “in the face of enormous social prejudice, the Christian ethic, and literary convention”, but an important one for Devanny who posits that the right to say yes is equally valid as the right to say no.

She frequently uses the device of code-switching between genders, as when Dawn Devoy and Lilian Sweet marry men who are physically beautiful and will give them strong and handsome children, but look to older, wiser and more affluent though less attractive men for their intellectual and cultural needs. In *Bushman Burke* the gender roles are more obviously reversed, Flora Wallace acting out the cliché of a dissolute roué who marries to boost the family fortunes but has no intention of changing his (her) behaviour to accommodate his (her) more innocent partner’s expectations. Violence is never far away from sexual politics in Devanny’s work and it is a raw frontier justice; men and women equally take responsibility for their own situations and mete out physical punishment for what they see as moral wrong done to them. It is a code that has always existed on the Coast and can be traced right through the literature, notably in Hunter, Bruno, McClenaghan, Hulme, Eggleston and Brown.

Racial equality is less convincingly argued in Devanny’s work. She was influenced by and shared George Winter’s concern with ‘placing’ Maori in relationship to mankind and social evolution, relying heavily on Frederick Engels’ *The Origin of the Family*, and she was also aware that race grievances paralleled feminist ones and were as significant as barriers to social equity.⁴⁹¹ She took pride in what she perceived as the New Zealanders’

⁴⁸⁹ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 58.

⁴⁹⁰ Sue Carter, ‘She’ll Be Right: Feminist Perspective in New Zealand Fiction,’ MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1994, 25.

⁴⁹¹ Carter 35.

attitudes to Maori⁴⁹² and used the device of role reversal, challenging her readers with relationships between Pakeha women and Maori men rather than the more usual pairing of Pakeha men with Maori women. Her Maori are superior beings and know it; varying between ‘noble savage’ and worldly sophisticates to suit her purpose, they live in a Pakeha world and, except in two of her short stories, behave in Pakeha ways. Taipo Burke is awed by “the ‘pride of the barbarian’” when he realises that sophisticated man-about-town Rangi Fell, who does not present as Maori, clings proudly to “the slight strain of the backward race”⁴⁹³; Devanny attributes noble birth and cultural superiority to her Maori characters in a romantic manner that can only be described as Arcadian, dating the work firmly as ‘Maoriland’ writing and sometimes using those “curious moments of Pakeha yearning” identified by Patrick Evans.⁴⁹⁴ In *Bushman Burke*, Rangi sits astride both worlds; he sits down at the piano and plays and sings an old Maori love song, startling Burke who is spellbound and “...forgot Fell was a white man. It seemed he had climbed over generations back to the flowery path,”⁴⁹⁵ while later it is Rangi who quotes Englishman John Masefield’s ‘Trade Winds’ and ‘Cargoes’ so that Burke is “drenched with the devastating effect”. Devanny’s observations on racial differences are better made when she draws back from colonised/coloniser theory and writes from her own experience of working class Maori on the West Coast where they, like the other miners and bushmen, have migrated in search of work and have no particular family roots or tribal identity.

In the short story ‘Mrs Salgast’s Baby’⁴⁹⁶, set at the Golden Ridge gold mine at the top of the West Coast and first published in the London *Sun*, battery manager Bob Salgast prides himself on his English parentage and superiority and is shattered when his wife gives birth to a baby who is obviously part-Maori. Suspicion falls on Tane Wetane, the only Maori working on Golden Ridge, and Salgast is intent on murder but is flabbergasted to be told he himself has Maori blood and was adopted by his English parents. Devanny did not consider ‘Mrs Salgast’s Baby’ one of her better stories but its appeal lies in the way the emotional tension between the characters is heightened by their stark, isolated environment.

⁴⁹² When the Devannys first went to Australia they were shocked by the ‘White Australia’ policy and attitudes and Devanny contrasted it unfavourably with the New Zealand situation. Ferrier 105.

⁴⁹³ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 81.

⁴⁹⁴ Patrick Evans, *The Long Forgetting: Post-Colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand*, Christchurch, Canterbury University Press, 2007, 87.

⁴⁹⁵ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 72.

⁴⁹⁶ Devanny, *Old Savage* 96.

There is an autobiographical element; when Devanny's father William Crook was the battery manager at Golden Ridge, it was widely known in the district that the men stole bits of gold-bearing quartz from the stamper and Jane discovered that Crook, the only person on the site with a 'dolly pot' or mortar, was crushing the quartz 'on tribute' for them.⁴⁹⁷

Music is an integral theme in Devanny's work, as it was in her own life. She learned to play the piano early, gaining confidence from her ability to dominate and control the Ferntown church congregation, and uses that to flag Dawn Haliday as spiritually superior, "bewildering her followers of clay".⁴⁹⁸ For Devanny, the typewriter was a later and secondary instrument; she played her audiences with music and public speaking which she learned 'at the coalface' in the Puponga miners' hall. She took voice production lessons and became an orator of some repute⁴⁹⁹, wooed by the Labour Party, who offered her a parliamentary career. She and Hal worked politically alongside the Semples, Paddy Webb and other ex-Coasters through the 1920s while she wrote her New Zealand fiction and developed her ear for casual dialogue, although the speech of characters like Monty Bellairs and Black Bill Hogan owes much to the popular 'Westerns' of the 1920s, and colloquial Australian and American expressions are scattered among the English ones. Her male characters are as cosmopolitan as the coalminers; Aspro Jimmy in *Poor Swine* and Roy Phipps in *Old Savage* are Australian, Duke in *Dawn Beloved* is from "Yankee-land". Her West Coast men say "By jingo", "I'll be jiggered" and "Jumpin' Jemina", a shearing hand tells "frolicsome yarns", a new arrival is asked, "Going to hang out long?"⁵⁰⁰ and a woman at the sawmill village exclaims, "My word. I've never seen anything like it"⁵⁰¹, genre-based speech patterns echoed by Frank Bruno in his 1962 *Fury at Finnegan's Folly*.

In *Poor Swine*, Lilian is a child of nature whose greatest talent is to imitate the natural calls of the birds in the bush, a skill she practises and develops with a child-like wonder. She is attracted to Julian Greville by his music and attracts his attention in turn by whistling, ostensibly to prove herself his equal but in fact using her voice as a mating call, and she shows off to other women by whistling and singing as a bird preens its feathers.

⁴⁹⁷ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 11.

⁴⁹⁸ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 55.

⁴⁹⁹ In Wellington she won a Workers' Educational Association (WEA) public speaking competition and was a member of the WEA debating team that won the Parliamentary Silver Shield, speaking against a university team with the Speaker of the House as adjudicator.

⁵⁰⁰ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 204.

⁵⁰¹ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 11.

Lilian's singing teacher notes her surprisingly wide vocal range, underlining both her chameleon-like ability to behave very well or very badly as she chooses and her aspirations to rise above the closed, limited opportunities of Denniston: "She must live in the clouds. She would top them".⁵⁰²

The Coast has a long tradition of valuing entertainers; miners' choirs and brass bands are important and the abilities to whistle, play, sing and make speeches are currency in the coalmining communities (later novelists Pattrick and Price both emphasise the dances and concerts on Denniston). Devanny makes the point over and over again by giving her characters talents that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also marketable. Her own piano-playing brought her income and gave her a political voice at Puponga, where she refused to donate her services for patriotic fundraising because the request undervalued and belittled her work; those who attended the dance paid only two shillings, far less than the thirty shilling fee she was asked to forfeit. On one occasion, she records, a miner who played the accordion followed her lead and refused to donate his own services after discussing her attitude with fellow unionists; he decided he would be 'scabbing' by taking her place at a Red Cross fundraiser and the dance did not proceed.⁵⁰³

Devanny argues through her characters that making music is valid work involving financial investment and with potential to finance independence, just as for Devanny public speaking and writing were career paths. She follows Edith Searle Grossman's feminist agenda by advocating equality of education and training⁵⁰⁴; an attitude that justifies Lilian Sweet's sexual relationship with her husband's friend Aspro Jimmy Morgan who, as a single miner, can afford to pay for her singing lessons. Devanny's own writing and singing aspirations were fuelled first in Dunedin, when she took music lessons and tried unsuccessfully to market film scripts to American producers, then in Wellington where at the age of 30 she began to work seriously at writing with some success, selling short stories first to the *Auckland Weekly News* and *New Zealand Freelance*, then to overseas journals such as *T P O'Connor's Weekly*, *Smith's Weekly*, *Man and Georgian Stories*. Her literary aspirations gradually took second place to political activism, however; although she

⁵⁰² Devanny, *Poor Swine* 114.

⁵⁰³ Ferrier, *Point of Departure* 71.

⁵⁰⁴ Edith Searle Grossmann and Edith Howitt Searle Grossman, *Hermione: A Knight of the Holy Ghost; a Novel of the Woman Movement*, London: Watts, 1908, 204.

published prolifically she recognised in later life that she had sacrificed her chances of literary success, saying ‘I realise now that I have not exploited the small measure of ability for writing I possess one whit’⁵⁰⁵.

The music of nature is at times overworked in *Poor Swine* but there are no classical Old World references; as a New Zealand-born and educated writer she has no European influences or pretensions. The theme of exile, identified by Ashcroft et al as a shared condition of most post-colonial literatures⁵⁰⁶, is noticeably absent from her work and the few references to England as ‘Home’ are made by cultured and educated ‘others’ like Mrs Greville in *Poor Swine*, who are outsiders to the stories (also, ironically, by Rangi Fell whose mother has Maori ancestry but who has been taught that England is culturally superior). Like most Coast writers Devanny is dismissive of ‘imported’ class consciousness, attributing it as a negative value to less likeable characters like Miette in *The Butcher Shop* and briskly declaring, in *Bushman Burke*, that, “Blue blood was too scarce – money alone made class”.⁵⁰⁷ She makes statements about her characters through their instruments: child of nature Lilian Sweet whistles like a bird; dark and brooding Julian Greville plays the violin; attractive and weak-willed Laurie Cameron plays the flute; shallow and self-centred Flora Burke plays jazz, which Burke finds loud and abrasive, and hums,⁵⁰⁸ a metaphor for her irritating tendency to intrude and dominate without really communicating. Another clue to Devanny’s characters, as Sue Carter notes,⁵⁰⁹ is their hands; the pianists in her stories obviously ‘play’ their audiences but Biddy Fane also has supple fingers, establishing her skills of manipulation, while Miette’s are “soft, white, and tiny – the hands of the incapable and ungenerous”.⁵¹⁰ Timber man Jack Burke’s hands are predictably calloused and stained but well-shaped, and Doctor Stallard’s are brown and hairy, indicating the animal sexuality beneath his professional veneer. The most overt signposting, however, is in the names of her women characters; Lilian Sweet and Lenore Divine are born to be beautiful, as is Dawn (Beloved) Haliday; Flora, Marigold, Tui, Fleur

⁵⁰⁵ Ron Store, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/devanny-jane-jean-5968>

⁵⁰⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back : Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, London ; New York: Routledge, 1989, 29.

⁵⁰⁷ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 90.

⁵⁰⁸ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 89.

⁵⁰⁹ Carter 59.

⁵¹⁰ Devanny, *Butcher Shop* 140.

and Columbine are comments on character and Margaret Messenger delivers the author's political point.

Devanny is convincing in her allusions to the outdoor environment, extolling the virtues of hard work, fresh air and exercise and associating the natural world with innocence and goodness. Her characters are grounded in the outdoors; Taipo Burke is introduced among his trees, Dawn and Hal Devanny spend the first days of their marriage swimming, climbing and walking, Lilian Sweet lies on the beach in the moonlight. In one of her most poignant and sincere stories a woman known only as 'Mum' chooses to return to her life of isolation and loneliness, in an area recognisable as West Whanganui at the top of the Coast, because of the glory of the sunset.⁵¹¹ The values are unmistakeably what Taipo Burke identifies as "decent life, proper life, life in the bush,"⁵¹² and the bush is unmistakeably West Coast although her lyric descriptions are loose at times and smack of the penny westerns she despises, as when she describes the Paturau river valley as "a land of hope and glory for the singing birds of charm the country abounded in".⁵¹³ She redeems herself in other passages, however, with "the humility of the rimu's glorious, down-sweeping foliage..."⁵¹⁴ and "the filmy ferns and kidneys; the hens and chickens; all their brood, and the lawyer sneaking under".⁵¹⁵

There is no romanticising of the industrial settlements, however; in *Poor Swine* the description of Denniston as a landscape of empty tins is powerfully symbolic; the inhabitants buy and consume pre-processed food and discard the containers, and the creek stinks with their effluent and refuse in a never-ending cycle of exploitation and decay because there is not enough water, not enough sun, not enough soil for healthy living. The physical landscape mirrors the moral decay of the community, and when Lilian is at her lowest a thick fog settles over Denniston for six days, confining and chaining people and reducing them to animal beings.⁵¹⁶ In such an environment it takes an outsider (Julian Greville) to offer a way out; his revelation of the secret wonders of the landscape at night

⁵¹¹ Devanny, 'The Woman', *Old Savage* 59.

⁵¹² Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 94.

⁵¹³ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 10.

⁵¹⁴ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 97.

⁵¹⁵ Devanny, *Bushman Burke* 9.

⁵¹⁶ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 131.

when the bush moths show their fragile beauty⁵¹⁷ foretells his rescue of Lilian from her Denniston life. Devanny's premise is that people's lives are shaped by systems rather than individual control, and her emphasis is on personal integrity rather than societal mores, that purity of motive which is reiterated over and over again in her work; Dawn falls in love with the intellectually and spiritually inadequate Val Devoy because "She saw the cleanness of him".⁵¹⁸ Devanny's sense of honour and personal morality, often at odds with the sexual and social attitudes of the day, got her into serious trouble in her later life in Australia, where in 1941 she was expelled from the Communist Party for 'moral degeneracy'⁵¹⁹, but is not out of place in the context of the Coast.

Hedley Colwill (Peter) Hooper: 1919-1991

Hooper was a Greymouth schoolteacher and writer who was strongly influenced by Henry David Thoreau⁵²⁰: his poetry and prose focus on the relationships between man and the land and he in turn had a strong influence on Coast literature over nearly five decades. He taught English at Greymouth Technical High School from 1946 to 1964 (when poets Jeffrey Paparoa Holman and Pat White were among his pupils) and for another ten years at Westland High School: he fostered quality reading by broadcasting book reviews on radio, organising poetry groups and for some years operating his own bookshop; he mentored and encouraged other Coast writers and in some cases published their work under his Longacres Press imprint.⁵²¹ His own published work comprises eight poetry collections, three novels, a short story collection and three non-fiction books as well as a number of contributions to literary and conservation books and journals.

⁵¹⁷ Devanny, *Poor Swine* 254-258.

⁵¹⁸ Devanny, *Dawn Beloved* 83.

⁵¹⁹ In fact, as Ferrier explains in her biography *Romantic Revolutionary*, Devanny was slandered by party members because of her intervention to help other women suffering sexual abuse. She was reinstated in 1944 but resigned in disillusionment five years later.

⁵²⁰ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or, Life in the Woods*, New York: Merrymount Press, 1936. Hooper continued to be inspired by this book, which he felt both reflected and informed his own philosophies.

⁵²¹ Named after Hooper's Paroa smallholding 'Longacres', and distinct from Longacre Press which was established in Dunedin in 1994 after McIndoe ceased publishing. Former McIndoe editor and Longacre Press co-founder Barbara Larsen, interviewed 30 March 2012, said that at the time she and her two publishing partners were unaware of Hooper's previous Longacres imprint.

Not long before his death Hooper researched and published *The Seas Between*,⁵²² a history of the New Zealand branch of his Hooper family. Illustrated with black and white photographs, it is a straightforward, factual and rather impersonal account with little of the depth of feeling that characterises his poems about family members close to him, but it usefully backgrounds the writer's sense of dual nationality, his respect for labourers and artisans and his relationship with the Greymouth area where he grew up. The Hoopers were a seafaring family from the Isles of Scilly and Peter's grandfather Captain Clement Hooper was a master mariner who first came to New Zealand as a 19-year-old sailor on the *Monarch* in 1854. He returned as a passenger on the *Edwin Fox* with his wife and four sons in 1880 to settle in Canterbury, where another seven children were born: the youngest, in 1889, was Peter's father Ernest. Their mother died when he was eight, their father went back to sea periodically and the younger boys, brought up by an older sister, went out to work early. Ernest and three of his brothers took up leasehold land at Kohatu in the Buller region and began bush felling for a nearby sawmill. They were working in Australia when war broke out: two of his brothers died in the war but Ernest, a sapper with the NZ Army 1st Field Coy Engineers, survived the fighting at Gallipoli and was invalided to England where he was married in 1916 and where his two sons were born.

Peter, the eldest, was christened Hedley Colwill Hooper after his uncle Richard Hedley Hooper who had died as a child. His English heritage, learned from his mother, was important to Peter, but the family moved back to New Zealand when he was five years old, first to Belgrove and then, in 1927, to a leased dairy farm at Coal Creek near Greymouth where Peter, his brother Antony and their much younger sister Jennifer, born in 1936, were educated. Their uncle Gordon, the only other family member still on the Coast, was killed in a bush felling accident at Reefton in 1933⁵²³ and his widow moved to Christchurch where their cousin, actor and director Elric Hooper, was born and brought up. The Hooper children inherited a love of literature from their mother Alice Lee, who not only knew a lot of poetry by heart and recited it to them but also wrote it, as did her brothers Len (who published two collections) and Ern (whose notebooks were passed on to

⁵²² Peter Hooper, *The Seas between: an account of the emigration of an English family to New Zealand in 1880: Captain Clement William Hooper, his wife Agnes Maria, and four of their sons*, Ahaura, Longacres Press, 1990.

⁵²³ Benjamin Gordon Hooper, married 1923, buried 14 April 1933 in Reefton cemetery.

Peter).⁵²⁴ Antony Hooper also wrote poetry and sent his work to Peter for safekeeping during World War Two, but he was wounded and died in Italy.⁵²⁵ Some years later Peter Hooper donated and oversaw the Antony Hooper Memorial English Prize at Greymouth High School in his brother's honour.

Peter was two years ahead of fellow writer Bill Pearson at Greymouth Technical High School: both were inspired by geography teacher W B (Snowy) Hutton⁵²⁶ who occasionally recited classical verse with great feeling⁵²⁷, both became teachers (although attending different training colleges) and did their probationary years at primary schools on the Coast, but both were shy, socially isolated young men and there appears to be no evidence that they knew of each other's interests in literature. Peter "never wanted to be anything but a writer",⁵²⁸ so, mindful of the hard times his parents had through the Depression, chose a profession that he mistakenly believed would allow him to support himself and write at the same time: he attended Teachers' Training College in Christchurch in 1938 and 1939, then taught at Runanga Primary School. When war broke out he joined the RNZAF as a radar mechanic and in 1944 was stationed at Bougainville in the Solomon Islands when he was invalided home with a skin complaint.

He graduated BA from the University of Canterbury in 1946 and returned to the Coast to teach English at his old school, now Greymouth District High School. In the late 1940s he broadcast at least 21 erudite and eclectic book reviews on the NZBC's Greymouth radio station⁵²⁹, discussing writers as diverse as Olaf Stapledon, Franz Kafka, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lu Hsun, Christopher Marlowe and Euripides, challenging his listeners to read biography, poetry and plays as well as travel books and fiction and to develop faculties of criticism and appreciation. He revived the school drama club and took pupils to Christchurch to see Shakespeare performed,⁵³⁰ co-wrote the school song ("To blue and

⁵²⁴ Mike Burford, Interview, 1981, 'An Opening in the Clouds'. Peter Hooper literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/075.

⁵²⁵ Private Antony John Hooper, died of wounds 23 April 1945, buried at Forlì.

⁵²⁶ Millar 39.

⁵²⁷ Burford.

⁵²⁸ Burford.

⁵²⁹ Peter Hooper, 'Book reviews broadcast for NZBC Greymouth,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2605/042; Typed and handwritten scripts for radio under the byline H C Hooper, most undated, (Review no 21 is dated 6 July 1948).

⁵³⁰ Peter Hooper, Script of the historical pageant and other papers relating to the Westland Centennial,' Literary papers, Hocken MS 2601/138.

gold/our colours bold/Ever true we shall be/ For us no fears/in future years/For our strength is in unity...”⁵³¹) and was for many years the school librarian. He was also active in the outdoors, took his pupils tramping (earning him the nickname ‘Boots’, which may also have referred to the heavy footwear he habitually wore at school), edited the tramping club magazine⁵³² and became an active conservationist. In 1957 he worked on a novel,⁵³³ the first of many which survive only in the form of notes and rough drafts, encompassing the characters, events and attitudes prevalent in small communities such as Coal Creek: central to the plot was the familiar Coast scenario of an unpopular policeman whom the townsfolk rebelled and eventually won against. He began sending work to publishers in the late 1950s and had his first short story, a reminiscence of his very happy childhood at Coal Creek (“I was alone in the world and the world was ten years old ... ”⁵³⁴) published in 1960. Those memories of the farm at the foot of Mt Davey, with its run-down buildings, apple trees and wild blackberries, reappear in much of his published and unpublished work, notably in the poem, ‘... Nor the Years Draw Nigh’⁵³⁵ whose final lines “... and taste again/the rind-sharp edge of morning,” were quoted in the last essay he wrote, in 1991.⁵³⁶

In 1960 Hooper produced a historical pageant, ‘The Heritage of Westland, a New Land Won from the Wilderness’, which was performed by a large Maori and European cast including a concert group of Arahura Maori led by Tuhuru Tainui. The script⁵³⁷ was written by Canterbury University historian Philip Ross May, a Coaster by birth, and geographer Murray McCaskill, both of whom have written extensively about West Coast history; May’s *The West Coast Gold Rushes* is the seminal work of non-fiction on the subject and McCaskill’s *The Poutini Coast : a geography of Maori settlement in Westland*, based on his 1960 PhD thesis, was preceded by articles on Maori and European settlement patterns on the Coast. The pageant, performed for the official celebration ceremony at

⁵³¹ Peter Hooper, ‘Proposed park and literary magazine,’ Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/014.

⁵³² H C Hooper (ed), *Boots; the Official Magazine of the West Coast Alpine Club*, Greymouth Evening Star (printer), 1949. Hooper edited the magazine for at least ten years.

⁵³³ Peter Hooper, ‘West Coast Novel – The Rebellion at Duffer’s Creek’. Literary papers, Hocken MS-2605/030.

⁵³⁴ Peter Hooper, ‘Once on a Summer’s Morning,’ *Arena* 54, 1960.

⁵³⁵ Hooper, *A Map of Morning* 35: quoted in Warren Jacobs and Peter Hooper. *New Zealand = Aotearoa*, Christchurch: Kowhai Publishing, 1991, 8.

⁵³⁶ Jacobs 8.

⁵³⁷ Phil May and M McCaskill, ‘*The Heritage of Westland; A New Land Won from the Wilderness*,’ unpublished manuscript, Hocken Library: Peter Hooper papers, MS 2601/138.

Victoria Park on 21 May 1960 and repeated a few weeks later in the Regent Theatre, was part of the larger centennial celebrations of Westland. The script emphasises multi-cultural harmony, equality and economic self-determination, with little reference to British colonialism or national politics. It begins with the Maori legends of Ngahue and Poutini, moves through European exploration to the deed of settlement signed between Maori and Pakeha in 1860, covers the gold rushes, honours pioneering women and the soldiers who fought in World War One and ends by calling to account the various occupations and professions of Coasters. Hooper himself played the role of schoolteacher with the line: “I reach with love into the unawakened mind and reveal to the child the truth dawning within him”. It was an accurate summary of his approach to his chosen field of work: in 1974 he commented, in a letter to former pupil and fellow poet Jeffrey Holman, that his most successful lesson that week “was a stroll outdoors with 3G”⁵³⁸ in which the ‘slow learners’ discussed aeronautics, flora and fauna, geometry and poetry, and that “one learns with one’s whole being that the hand teaches the brain”.⁵³⁹ Later at Westland High School he organised evenings of poetry readings interspersed with the pop music of Donovan, Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones.⁵⁴⁰

In 1961 Hooper took a sabbatical year and went to Europe to visit his brother’s grave and reconnect with his English heritage. His first collection of poems resulted from that journey, in which he spent time visiting gardens and country places, enjoying the changing of the seasons and the beauty of Europe’s deciduous landscape, and discovering connections between words and landscape, notably in the work of Chinese poets Po Chu I and Wang Wei. The poems also reflect on the broadening divide between his home environment and his intellectual and cultural horizons: He attended a poetry festival in London, enjoying sessions on the recorded poetry of Dylan Thomas and Alfred Lord Tennyson as well as live readings from poets such as Ted Hughes, and sent a report for *New Zealand Listener*⁵⁴¹ (his first published work in that journal). “No one from New Zealand read there,” he noted, although there were poets from Canada, Australia, India and Ghana who did.

⁵³⁸ The experience was used in the poem ‘Distance Pacing with 3G,’ *Selected Poems* 17.

⁵³⁹ Peter Hooper, letter to Jeff, 14 April, 1974. Peter Hooper papers, Hocken Library, MS-2608/003.

⁵⁴⁰ ‘Evening of Modern Music and Poetry at Westland High School 29 July 1970’. Peter Hooper papers, Hocken Library MS-2604/050.

⁵⁴¹ Hooper, Peter. ‘Poetry at the Mermaid’, in *New Zealand Listener*, 25 August, 1961.

His pilgrimage to Antony's grave inspired 'A Letter from Italy' ("Dear Tony, I wrote for you these words/you will not read You remember the farm in autumn ... ") which he sent to *Landfall* editor Charles Brasch while he was still overseas, saying, "It's a New Zealand poem and belongs there ..."⁵⁴² Brasch rejected the lengthy poem but suggested in some detail how to tighten it up and improve it which Hooper did, working on it over several years and renaming it 'Journey Towards an Elegy'. In 1968 he entered it in the Rothmans Literary Competition and was shortlisted in the final four but disqualified, with considerable regret expressed by judge Professor J C Garrett⁵⁴³, because he had unwittingly broken the rule of anonymity by naming his brother in the dedication. The poem was finally published by Bob Gormack in 1969 in the collection of the same name.

The 1960s were frustrating years for Hooper, whose growing recognition as a writer exacerbated the conflict with his teaching commitments. In 1959 he and Duncan Hardie, whose second poetry collection had just been published⁵⁴⁴, held the first of an occasional series of poetry readings under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA); by 1962 they had formed the Greymouth Poetry Group, reading not only from their own work but also from modern poets such as T S Eliot and Cecil Day Lewis, and Hooper began to sense a growing audience for the work of Coast writers. He planned in detail a West Coast magazine, to be called 'Prospect', to fill the perceived gap between the "purely introspective" literary magazines of the day, (*Mate*, *Landfall*, *Arena*, *Image*) with their "self-conscious intellectuality and lack-humour"⁵⁴⁵, and a more popular interest in reading. Apparently 'Prospect' (the title chosen ahead of 'Grassroots' and 'Pounamu'), which he hoped would become a quarterly magazine managed through the government Adult Education programme and funded by advertisements and subscriptions, was a gleam of ideas that remained unfulfilled, but it was in this planning exercise that he most clearly defined his view of Coast writing: "Write of New Zealanders who have family traditions stretching back a hundred years – who don't feel New Zealand a young country – who

⁵⁴² Peter Hooper, Letter to Charles Brasch, 5 July, 1961. Literary papers, Hocken MS-0996-002/184.

⁵⁴³ 'Outstanding Biography Wins Literary Award', *Evening Post*, 3 April 1969, 13.

⁵⁴⁴ Hardie, Duncan. *Musings*. Wellington: Capricorn Press, 1959.

⁵⁴⁵ Peter Hooper, 'Notes on a Proposed Literary Magazine,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/011.

don't quote poetry or feel nostalgia for England – people who love the Coast and its life".⁵⁴⁶

There is no irony in Hooper the poet's definition; like Curnow he associated 'old school' literature with colonialism. He planned to showcase contemporary Coast poets, including Hardie and Peter Jacobson,⁵⁴⁷ the latter a University of Canterbury graduate working in Greymouth and part of the Greymouth poetry group, as well as highlighting the earlier work of O'Regan and Smith. He was also keen to promote artists such as Alison Sanson, Peter Hughson and Toss Woollaston, who took on the Rawleighs franchise for the Greymouth area in 1949 and began painting the Coast "...with great violence in subdued colour...".⁵⁴⁸ Hooper owned at least two Woollaston paintings, including one of the Taramakau River which hung over his fireplace.⁵⁴⁹ He later wrote, referencing Keats' famous lines "Beauty is truth, truth beauty"⁵⁵⁰ in terms of West Coast artists' reactions to their environment, that " ... the canvases of Toss Woollaston constantly emphasise the energies of nature in mountain and water forces; The Bone People is a rugged boulder of only partly disciplined power; the pots of Yvonne Rust match the challenging energies of the potter herself".⁵⁵¹ His contact list was much wider, however; although the West Coast was to be a major theme, he saw the literary journals of the day as "...far too 'New Zealand-mad'"⁵⁵² and intended the emphasis to be on Australasian writing. The central problem was to find the line between literature and journalism, he noted. 'Prospect' would also draw on unpublished letters and diaries, would carry stories about bird-watching, unusual or interesting gardens, place names and characters, and would utilise the work of natural historian Edward Luke Kehoe, a fellow teacher and broadcaster who lived in Greymouth from 1937 to 1956 and whose book collection was gifted to the Grey District Library, where many of his notes and radio scripts are also archived. Hooper identified Rowley Habib, Hone Tuwhare, Ruth Dallas and Ross McFarlane as 'sympathetic' writers from elsewhere in New Zealand, and Christchurch historian Philip May and editor of *The*

⁵⁴⁶ Peter Hooper, 'Notes on a Proposed Literary Magazine,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/011.

⁵⁴⁷ Peter Jacobson and Michael Smither (ills), *Poems*, Akaroa: P M Jacobson, 1985.

⁵⁴⁸ 'To Edith 9 Dec 1949', in Woollaston 193.

⁵⁴⁹ Hooper's sister Jennifer Blackburn, interviewed 6 December 2011.

⁵⁵⁰ John Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

⁵⁵¹ Jacobs 9.

⁵⁵² Peter Hooper, 'Notes on a Proposed Literary Magazine,' Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/011.

Press John Schroder as former Coasters who might contribute stories about their boyhoods. He intended a regular feature called 'Rediscovery', commenting on early books like Butler's *Erewhon*, Alice Moreland's *Through South Westland*, and his own 'bible', Thoreau's *Walden*, and he already had in hand an extract from his own unpublished novel, *The Edge of the Sea*, and a contemporary short story from Hokitika writer Pamela Heald.

The 1963 publication of Bill Pearson's *Coal Flat*, which he considered a West Coast classic⁵⁵³, was a further incentive: at the end of 1964 he resigned his job at Greymouth High School determined to work full time as a writer, and for the next two years he took only occasional relief teaching. From 1963 to 1966 he had six stories published in the *New Zealand Listener*, most of which were later reprinted in *The Goat Paddock*. Derived from his own experiences and observations, the stories he wrote at this time reveal an empathy with the hopes, dreams and emotional struggles of ordinary people and many were set on the Coast: 'Boys and girls come out to play' and 'Too Wide is the World' are based on pupils he taught, 'Something to Think About' reflects an incident in his own youth and 'The End of the Road,' a more imaginative story which he tried unsuccessfully with several publishers during the 1960s, was based on a childhood memory of an old swagger who slept in their barn at Coal Creek. 'The Goat Paddock', the title story in the collection eventually published by John McIndoe in 1981, won Story of the Month and was published in the *Weekly News*, and 'The Fountains of Rome' was broadcast by the NZBC⁵⁵⁴ on eight stations as winner of the Story of the Month prize. During this period he wrote 'The Edge of the Sea', which he sent unsuccessfully to several publishers. "Not your cup of tea, I think, but faith in the unpredictability of editors dies hard",⁵⁵⁵ he wrote to Charles Brasch, who rejected it with a kinder-than-usual note of regret.⁵⁵⁶ Renamed 'Desire on the Sea', the novel, about a woman yearning for love and settling for second best, was shortlisted in the top eight fiction entries for the 1968 Rothmans Literary Competition and was eventually reworked as a short story and published in *The Goat Paddock*.⁵⁵⁷ Its climax graphically describes the often-extreme weather conditions on the

⁵⁵³ Peter Hooper, 'Around My Library Fire,' *Grey Star*, 2 August, 1969.

⁵⁵⁴ Broadcast by NZBC on 8 stations between 22 Feb and 31 May, 1965. Hocken MS 2601/022.

⁵⁵⁵ Peter Hooper, Letter to Charles Brasch, 29 August 1965. Literary papers, Hocken MS-0996-002/184.

⁵⁵⁶ Charles Brasch, Letter 17 September 1965, 'Correspondence with Peter Hooper,' Charles Brasch literary and personal papers (ARC-0124), Hocken MS-0996-002/184.

⁵⁵⁷ Hooper, 'The Hut,' *Goat Paddock* 95-143.

Coast: the hut perched at the foot of a cliff is in the end rendered uninhabitable by a deluge of rain which causes the hillside to slip around it while the woman huddles alone in the dark, unable to move until the storm abates.

In 1966 Hooper opened his bookshop in Albert Street in the vain hope of providing himself with an income from the books he loved. Walden Books had an impact on the Coast; it stocked quality reading material, encouraged literary adventure and became a magnet for both readers and writers. Window displays were chosen with care and local writers encouraged and promoted (first time author Jack Ewen, whose work Hooper praised⁵⁵⁸, saw his book prominently displayed alongside Bill Pearson's *Coal Flat*) but a stand-alone bookshop that did not sell stationery or other commodities was never going to be viable in Greymouth and after he had owned it for a year Hooper became disheartened, sold the bookshop to a consortium of friends and reluctantly accepted the job of deputy principal at Westland High School in Hokitika. Walden Books continued to be a meeting place for writers and artists, however: Hooper helped to organise and participated in readings by visiting poets such as Hone Tuwhare, who first came to Greymouth in 1968. He ventured into publishing for the first time with *A Pleasure of Friends*, a locally-printed limited edition collection of ten poems including work by John Caselberg, Brian Turner and Peter Ireland, a Hokitika-born painter and photographic curator then in his early 20s and at the beginning of his career. Hooper's own poem 'The Saviours' reflects the empathy with and respect for adolescent emotions which characterises many of his short stories.

In the early 1970s Walden Books was moved by owner Roger Ewer, a member of the original consortium who had gradually brought out the other shareholders, into shared premises further up Albert Street closer to the railway station and opposite the *Grey Star* newspaper office. The bookshop now occupied the back half of Taipo Crafts, a craft and clothing shop part-owned by poet Anne Donovan, and had a big fireplace which made it an attractive gathering place for artists and writers, many of whom were part of the alternative lifestyle movement which gathered momentum on the Coast through that decade. Communes⁵⁵⁹ were established in the mid-1970s at Fox River, at the northern end of the Coast, and Tirimoana in the south, providing a fresh influx of creative ideas and activities

⁵⁵⁸ Hooper, 'Around My Library Fire.'

⁵⁵⁹ The 1974 Labour Government's 'ohu' scheme encouraged people to reconnect with the land by establishing communal lifestyle settlements in rural areas.

from city-based people keen to experience rural living; the Otago-based *NZ Mushroom*⁵⁶⁰ provided a networking platform and it was in this cultural environment that the film ‘Wild Man’ was made, alternative theatre troupe Red Mole performed in Greymouth and Hooper’s *Earth Marriage*, published in 1972, sold 2,000 copies. In 1979 Ewer published a second poetry collection under the Walden Books imprint, including work by Hooper whose poem ‘The Battle of Maruia or The Battle of a Powder Puff’⁵⁶¹ reflects his growing involvement with environmental activism. It describes in epic verse how a group of conservationists camped en masse in the Maruia forest to demonstrate against tree felling but the expected confrontation with locals did not eventuate. Hooper was also involved in the anti-Vietnam war and Nambasa movements at this time (his 1969 poem ‘Vietnamese Lullaby’⁵⁶² records his despair about the war) but he was a quiet, shy man who preferred writing to speaking and often took on the roles of recorder and correspondent.

Hooper published eight poetry collections between 1964, when he left Greymouth High School, and 1977 when he finally retired from full-time teaching. His second collection, *Journey Towards an Elegy and other poems*, inspired modernist painter Colin McCahon, who was introduced to his work by Toss Woollaston⁵⁶³ and who used lines and stanzas such as “Poetry is for Peasants”⁵⁶⁴ and “Parts of Speech”⁵⁶⁵ from Hooper’s poem ‘Notes in the Margin’⁵⁶⁶ in a sequence of nineteen ‘written’ paintings completed that same year of 1969. Two of the works combine Hooper’s words with those of Matire Kereama, an Aupouri elder.

Hooper did not consciously set out to become a Coast poet in the regional sense, and admits that when he began writing poetry as a young man in isolation from other writers it took

⁵⁶⁰ First published from Waitati, near Dunedin, in 1974, *Mushroom* was an annual publication modelled on the American *Whole Earth Catalogue*. It provided rural self-sufficiency advice and resources, and was a communication forum for artists, musicians, writers and craftspeople.

⁵⁶¹ Ewer 34-36.

⁵⁶² Hooper, *Journey* 45.

⁵⁶³ Woollaston and McCahon were members of The Group, an informal Christchurch-based modern arts society.

⁵⁶⁴ Colin McCahon, ‘Poetry isn’t in my words’, Sept 5 (001485) and Sept 19, 1969 (cm000075); ‘Poetry isn’t my words’, Sept 25, 1969 (cm000864); ‘Poetry is the tongue of the poor’, Sept 25, 1969 (cm000072), written paintings and drawings series at www.mccahon.co.nz.

⁵⁶⁵ McCahon, ‘Nouns and Verbs’ (cm000473) and ‘Parts of Speech’ (cm000128) August 21, 1969, written paintings and drawings series.

⁵⁶⁶ Hooper, *Journey* 48-59.

him a long time to look past the obvious and wean himself from romanticism.⁵⁶⁷ He was inspired by American modernist poets through the presence and teaching of Bob Stowell in the American Studies programme at Canterbury and later by David Walker and Gary Snyder whose “Zen-inflected environmentalism”⁵⁶⁸ focused his own work on the relationships between man and landscape. His poems are enriched not only through his physical travels but also through a lifetime of wide reading, particularly of the Chinese scholar/official poets of the T’ang dynasty (Po Chu I, Wang Wei, Yuan Chan, Tu Fu and T’ao Chen) and later the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Nevertheless, the theme of “rejected landscapes” resonated from the start. Like Thoreau, he found inspiration and comfort in the fine detail of landscape and the ongoing relationship, through changing seasons, with a small defined corner of it. His Coast poetry has affection and optimism; he describes the purity and “unhaunted loneliness” of the hills⁵⁶⁹ and, in ‘Wild damsons’⁵⁷⁰, sees in the ruins of an old pub site to the promise of summer fruit. It’s also grounded in shrewd observation; in ‘As I lay Dying’, a poem Hooper felt was one of his best⁵⁷¹, he describes “Trees like old men/bent under sacks of coal ...”.⁵⁷² Like Hulme, he builds towers both metaphorically and physically; both value their hands-on relationships with land and sea coast and seek fresh ways through poetry to record their interactions.

His parents Ernest (known locally as ‘Aussie’) and Alice sold the Coal Creek farm and moved into Greymouth in 1953 and Ernest took on casual labouring work, including a stint underground coal mining. Hooper lived in a number of different houses, always with gardens, in and around Paroa a few kilometres south of Greymouth on the Hokitika Road, but in April 1974 he bought a 10-acre farmlet at 369 Milton Road, fenced off and leased part of it and set about establishing a permanent home. He called the property ‘Longacres’, arranged paths and gardens in harmony with the larger environment and his own philosophical needs, including a Chinese poets’ garden with rock and stone features (“I think I understand you/ You loved rocks/because they spoke of durance/beyond your

⁵⁶⁷ Peter Hooper, ‘Poet in a Rejected Landscape,’ Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/035.

⁵⁶⁸ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman. ‘Hello America; Christchurch’s 1970s Pacific Moment’ in *Ka Mate Ka Ora*, issue 9, March 2010. http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/kmko/09/ka_mate09_holman.asp

⁵⁶⁹ Hooper, *Selected Poems* 38.

⁵⁷⁰ Hooper, *Selected Poems* 58.

⁵⁷¹ Burford, MS-2601/075.

⁵⁷² Hooper, *Selected Poems* 20.

reach ... ”⁵⁷³) and built ‘Lostwithin Cottage’⁵⁷⁴ using river stone and exposed timber beams with a large study and library as its heart. It was a difficult period as he was still working full time and dealing with his parents’ old age and illness: his father, who had always been a physically strong man although very deaf in later years, was hospitalised and died in 1977, his mother, with whom he had the closest relationship, died in a rest home the following year, and in ‘Huia Villa’⁵⁷⁵ he expresses his feelings of helplessness and betrayal as well as his awareness of his own ageing. His ‘Elegy for Muriel’⁵⁷⁶, a reflective farewell not only to friend and artist Muriel Firth but also to his mother, was published more than a decade afterwards, as was his final tribute to his father: “... that old stubborn man/time couldn’t kill”.⁵⁷⁷

Selected Poems, his last published book of poetry, marked another turning point in his writing; (“in most of his poems it is the meditation that finally takes control,” Winston Rhodes commented⁵⁷⁸) as he retired from teaching and began writing more prose. There were times of quiet contentment in those last years at Longacres; his 1983 poem ‘Talking to Thomas Hardy’ begins, “He would have understood this night/ my sitting here in this firelit room”.⁵⁷⁹ Drawn even more towards the work of Thoreau and also of Vita Sackville West⁵⁸⁰, he kept working on prose and poem cycles based on the changing seasons and developing landscape: he reworked and expanded some of the material in his prose poem ‘Earth Light’ into an essay, ‘Poet in a Rejected Landscape’⁵⁸¹ and a more personal memoir, ‘Tales of a Memory Tree’⁵⁸², neither of which were published, and wrote a seasonally-based poem cycle ‘Stones of Longacres’ which editor Brian Turner rejected in 1979 as loose and over-wordy.⁵⁸³ (It was eventually published in a much-reduced and tightened

⁵⁷³ Hooper, ‘To Wang Wei,’ *Journey* 42.

⁵⁷⁴ According to Holman (interview 6 October 2011) the name had a double meaning: Hooper’s mother Alice Lee came from Lostwifield in England.

⁵⁷⁵ Hooper, *Selected Poems* 24-25.

⁵⁷⁶ Peter Hooper, ‘Elegy for Muriel’ in John O’Connor (ed) *Plainwraps 2: Autumn 1989*, Christchurch, 8-9.

⁵⁷⁷ Hooper, ‘Words and Grass’ in *Plainwraps* 3.

⁵⁷⁸ Winston Rhodes, ‘Four New Zealand Poets,’ *NZ Monthly Review*, August 1977, 16.

⁵⁷⁹ Peter Hooper, *Landfall* 147, September 1983, 259.

⁵⁸⁰ Vita Sackville-West, *The Garden*, London: Michael Joseph, 1946.

⁵⁸¹ Peter Hooper, ‘Poet in a rejected landscape,’ Nature essays, Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/035.

⁵⁸² Peter Hooper, Handwritten loose sections for ‘Tales of a Memory Tree’ - ‘The Scythe’ and ‘The Pen’, Literary papers, Hocken MS-2608/003.

⁵⁸³ Brian Turner, letter 30 July, 1979, Peter Hooper papers, Hocken Library, MS-2601/040.

form, as ‘Words and Grass’⁵⁸⁴ in *Plainwraps*, a short-lived Christchurch poetry magazine edited by John O’Connor.) In an unpublished note Hooper reflects on ‘As I Lay Dying’,⁵⁸⁵ first published in 1969, noting that “The 57 lines of the poem, technically as good as any I have written, seem strangely dated as I re-read them. True at the time, they no longer represent my attitude to the Coast, which is increasingly one of a wider knowledge of ecological realities fostering a deeper appreciation of the land itself”.⁵⁸⁶ His farewell to poetry was, appropriately, in verse: just as appropriately, it was published in *Landfall*, after years of rejections; originally titled ‘Voice on an East Wind’ it appeared as ‘Autumn Testament’⁵⁸⁷ and ends:

when someone asks
whatever happened to Hooper?
laugh and tell him

east wind
ran off with a voice
from a morning hill
shouting to be born.

Hooper is probably best known for his trilogy of futuristic novels, set in Westland and Canterbury about 300 years after a cataclysmic natural event destroyed most of the population. In Butler’s *Erewhon* the hero crosses the Southern Alps to the mysterious West Coast and finds himself going nowhere backwards in a land where values are inverted and machines rule. A hundred years later in *Song of the Forest* the journey is reversed when the tribe, descended from survivors of a dramatic climate change, decide to leave the forest and cross to the Canterbury Plains, where they encounter a strangely different world from their own male-dominated, hunter-gatherer stag-worshipping priest-led society. There are metaphors for the Coast in this material: perhaps unwittingly, Hooper presents in his sharp cultural divide between west and east, his own intellectual journey; like Pearson and Thompson he struggles to bridge the gap between the artistic and academic stimulation of the cities and the cultural isolation of Greymouth, where he must find his own tools and create his own intellectual world but, unlike the others, he chose to stay on the Coast. Just

⁵⁸⁴ Hooper, ‘Words and Grass’ in *Plainwraps* 2-5.

⁵⁸⁵ Hooper, *Journey* 20.

⁵⁸⁶ Peter Hooper, ‘Nature Essays’ c1980s, Literary papers, Hocken MS-2601/035.

⁵⁸⁷ Peter Hooper, ‘Autumn Testament’ in *Landfall* 138, 1984, 139-141.

as his main character Tama slowly developed a written language, so Hooper the teacher and writer fostered a Coast literature based on the environment and particularly the forests which were his inspiration.

Originally entitled 'Dark Victory', *Song of the Forest* was published in 1979 after years of rejections by publishers; one reviewer described it as "a foundation myth, a fusion, not quite Maori, not quite Christian,"⁵⁸⁸ another likened it to "New Zealand in the dreamtime".⁵⁸⁹ Like Hulme, Hooper's affinity with the coastal environment informs not only his subject matter but his literary constructions: the language draws directly on the auditory influences of the Coast, the sound of wind in a forest and the base groundswell of the sea, breath-rhythms which are intended to evoke emotional responses in a style strongly influenced by Cecil Maurice Bowra, whose *Primitive Song*⁵⁹⁰ he acknowledges as a source.⁵⁹¹ The next two novels, published in the mid-1980s, develop the theme which is central to his philosophy, the empowering nature of the written word.

Fellow Coaster Keri Hulme, however, saw Hooper's "inadvertent trilogy" (his description, quoted in her review of *Time and the Forest*⁵⁹²) as a book that went on too long, losing the force, vigour and lyrical quality of the first volume; she points to weaknesses of plot, language and dialogue, compares the "eight sparkling poems" in the first volume with "one short and not very good" in the last, sympathises with Hooper's predicament in attempting a long philosophical novel within the constraints of conventional publishing formats, but asks "Is it wise, wise as a writer, to attempt to make a work out of your own approach to life?" In Hulme's view, the trilogy went wrong when the story moved away from the Coast, because, she says, "the brooding haunting verdure of the West Coast – potent and omnipresent" is the mainspring of Hooper's work.

In the final decade of his life Hooper's writing was increasingly dominated by his search for a cross-cultural mythology that encompassed Maori spiritual values and an ecological awareness. The three novels extend his thesis that New Zealand is still a nation in search of its soul and that unity with the natural world, in particular the forest, has

⁵⁸⁸ Naylor Hillary, Book Review, A Song in the Forest. *The Press*, 29 August 1979

⁵⁸⁹ Book review, A Song in the Forest, *Otago Daily Times*, 28 November 1989

⁵⁹⁰ C M Bowra, *Primitive Song*, Toronto: Mentor, 1963. Bowra (1898-1971) was an Oxford academic who was openly homosexual.

⁵⁹¹ Peter Hooper. 'Correspondence and papers relating to Song in the Forest.' Literary Papers, Hocken MS-2601/088

⁵⁹² Keri Hulme, 'Moving away, falling off,' *New Zealand Listener*, 5 September 1987, 63.

always allowed man to see “in the mirror of nature the shapes of his fears and hopes and dreams...”⁵⁹³ In 1981 he and McIndoe editor, fellow tramper and poet Brian Turner made a strong conservation statement with *Our Forests, Ourselves*, a holistic analysis of physical, spiritual and literary relationships between New Zealanders and their native flora. Written in the same timeframe as *A Song in the Forest* and modelled on a contemporary iconic and empowering document for the feminist movement⁵⁹⁴, the book nevertheless languishes in the University of Canterbury Engineering Library under ‘Forestry’. In it Hooper argues that in pre-colonial New Zealand the most prominent life form was the forest, with its symbiosis of birds and trees, and that this was understood and appreciated by Maori but not by European colonists. He agrees with Holcroft that “Here, if anywhere, are to be found the conditions of a spiritual outlook”⁵⁹⁵ but that modern man is not used to “the breathing silence of the natural world”,⁵⁹⁶ and seldom enters it alone. Ten years later he was able to write that “Most Kiwis have still to find a natural philosophy that can include the ancient Maori concept of ‘mauri’, the sacred life force, as well as the teachings of Christianity, but the Green Revolution is already making that amalgam possible”.⁵⁹⁷

He was increasingly recognised as a voice for conservation, representing the West Coast branch of the Forest and Bird Society as a national councillor: in an essay entitled ‘Beginning Again in Humility’⁵⁹⁸ he praised the architects of the imminent Environment Act 1986, widely known as the Environmental Protection Act, which after much public discussion and lobbying established a ministry dedicated to preserving and managing much of the country’s native forest and wildlife assets, and followed it up with a detailed submission on the future of South Westland’s forests.⁵⁹⁹ He wrote an essay for *Forest and Bird*⁶⁰⁰ (about the Paparoa ranges, the sea mists and Thoreau’s philosophies), the foreword to Stephen Barnett’s *Magnificent Wilderness*⁶⁰¹ and, in the year he died, the text for a book of nature photographs by Warren Jacobs. This last, although covering the whole of New

⁵⁹³ Peter Hooper, *Our Forests, Ourselves*, Dunedin, John. McIndoe, 1981, 16.

⁵⁹⁴ Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.

⁵⁹⁵ Holcroft, *Deepening Stream* 27.

⁵⁹⁶ Hooper, *Our Forests* 6.

⁵⁹⁷ Jacobs 8.

⁵⁹⁸ Peter Hooper, *Forest and Bird*, February 1986, 18-20.

⁵⁹⁹ Hooper, ‘Submission on Future Options.’MS-2601/035.

⁶⁰⁰ Peter Hooper, ‘A Window Upon Mountains,’ *Forest and Bird*, August 1989, 42-43.

⁶⁰¹ Stephen Barnett, *Magnificent Wilderness: Pictures from the New Zealand Wilderness*, Auckland: Random Century, 1991.

Zealand, summarises and encapsulates his love of the Coast: “We go to the forest to be absorbed, to be enfolded by natural sights and sounds and odours, harmonies of colours and textures in bark and leaf-light and shadows ...”.⁶⁰²

After he left teaching, Hooper continued to actively mentor and encourage other writers, using his familiarity with the education system to facilitate writers’ workshops and applying to the Arts Council for funding to assist the publication of books under the Longacres imprint.⁶⁰³ He regularly travelled overseas: in 1980 to the Isles of Scilly, where he researched his family history; in 1986 to Kenya to meet Julius Kitivi, whose education he had sponsored through Save the Children Fund. Now an adult in his twenties working in Nairobi, Kitivi not only hosted Hooper in the city but also took him to his native village to meet his extended family, an experience recorded in *Shade of the Mugumo Tree*.⁶⁰⁴ It was an introduction to poverty of material things for the New Zealander, who notes that in Kenya the oppressed were the majority rather than the minority,⁶⁰⁵ but he was also made aware of the expanded world and wider horizons of the African continent and the way its vastness shaped the philosophies of the people; he wrote of the West Coast that “Our saline environment has made us hardy and independent as a people, wanderers to far horizons, but conversely the perpetual salt abrasion of a shifting littoral has bred in us an uncertainty and suspicion of the long view...”⁶⁰⁶ The Mugumo tree from which the book is titled, an ancient giant fig revered by the Kikuyu people, grew in Kitivi’s village where Hooper, now in his late 60s, was received as an honoured guest. He had long regarded ancient trees, on the Coast and elsewhere, as sacred groves equivalent to Christian churches, and he was able to identify with and respect the village elders who linked the wellbeing of their trees with their own cultural and spiritual life, noting that “I have always been conscious of belonging to a society which has long forgotten its roots in the earth...”⁶⁰⁷

In 1987 Hooper reluctantly gave up his dreams at Longacres, conceding that the property was too big for him to manage, and moved to a smaller section at Ahaura in the

⁶⁰² Jacobs 8.

⁶⁰³ *Winter skies*, 1983; *Saturday afternoons*, 1984; *Acts of Resistance*, 1985; *Some Must Die*, 1987; *Something to be said for runaway buses*, 1989. Hooper also published Peter Payne’s *Levity, Brevity, Bite* (Paroa: Longacres Press, 1986), a poetry collection with no specific West Coast content.

⁶⁰⁴ Peter Hooper, *Shade of the Mugumo Tree – a Kenyan Journey*, Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1990.

⁶⁰⁵ Hooper, *Mugumo* 28.

⁶⁰⁶ Hooper, *Mugumo* 35.

⁶⁰⁷ Hooper, *Mugumo* 44.

Grey Valley. Characteristically he threw himself into laying out another garden, researched the history of a giant lime tree nearby (the largest of its species in New Zealand, measured at 76ft in 1971)⁶⁰⁸ and began collecting literary and mythological references to the linden tree, as the species was known in Europe, with a view to writing about it in the cyclical essay series he was still planning, now re-named ‘Gardens in the West’. He was unhappy at Ahaura, however, and in 1990 he sold the house and returned to Paroa where he bought a property at Manuka Place, yet again planting a vegetable garden, cultivating native trees and designing a shrubbery which would attract and feed the birds. He continued to write intensively, correspond widely and engage in the cultural activities of the Greymouth community. His death came suddenly, though not unexpectedly: now in his seventies and suffering from bowel cancer, he died quietly at home alone, his friends alerted only when he failed to turn up at a book launching.⁶⁰⁹

In 1988, after he sold Longacres, he had made his last overseas trip, crossing the USA from San Francisco to Boston by Greyhound bus and taking the opportunity to visit Walden Pond in Massachusetts. If he had written about that journey he might well have echoed Thoreau’s famous rationale which Hooper had made his own: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived”.⁶¹⁰

Otago poet Brian Turner, Hooper’s long-time editor, fellow environmentalist and personal friend and now his literary executor, wrote the following lines in his ‘Elegy for Peter Hooper’⁶¹¹:

I’d like to think Westland’s laureate will one day
 receive his due, but doubt it, for writing that conveyed
 a love of place, respect for people and other creatures,
 and an unwavering faith in the force of patient instruction
 has never been sexy in a place where cultural cringing’s
 enduring.

⁶⁰⁸ Henri Te Rakau, Department of Conservation, Westland office, 22 December 1987, Peter Hooper literary papers, Hocken MS 2601-083.

⁶⁰⁹ Marlene Bennetts interview 10 November 2011.

⁶¹⁰ Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854

⁶¹¹ Brian Turner, *Taking Off*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2001, 45.

Keri Hulme: 1947-

Hulme has been the West Coast's best-known literary figure since her only published novel *The Bone People* won the Booker Prize in 1985; although other novels are in progress⁶¹² the main body of her work is short stories, poems and essays; she has published eight books (three poetry, three prose and two non-fiction) and contributed to numerous journals and anthologies. Some of her work has been set to music⁶¹³, much of it is about herself and her life on the sea shore of South Westland. Her Coast-based writing, concerned above all else with the land, the sea coast and the creatures that inhabit both, shares much with Peter Hooper's poems and essays: both look to their mountains (Hooper's 1989 description of mist in the Paparoa Range⁶¹⁴ is echoed by Hulme's "A lot of mornings, you look to the bluff, and there is this mist..."⁶¹⁵); both draw from the sounds of the sea; both have intimate knowledge of the seasonal lives of birds, plants and insects around their homes and both are fully aware that "Here at the world's end/we're not exempt from/ the harvest of folly".⁶¹⁶ For Hulme, however, the Westland environment is infinitely and joyously edible, sustaining not only the body but the spirit; she celebrates food (most famously whitebait) and has done so consistently in poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction. This is not only a reflection of her Maori (Kai Tahu) heritage, a genetic eighth and a dominating influence, but of the way in which people on the Coast (and elsewhere in New Zealand) have finally overcome their colonial inhibitions and become attuned to their environments. That the first Europeans in Westland suffered near-starvation is well-documented by non-fiction writers (Charles Heaphy, Charles Money and Reuben Waite among others); in 1842 Thomas Brunner, trapped by rain in the Buller Gorge, had to eat his dog Rover to survive⁶¹⁷ and in 1864 bank agent George Preshaw records of the first arrivals, "The greatest hardship

⁶¹² Kim Worthington mentions *Bait* and *On the Shadow Side* in 'Hulme, Keri, *Oxford Companion* 249.

⁶¹³ Elmsly, John, and Keri Hulme, *Three Winesongs*, Auckland: J.Elmsly, 1992; David Hamilton and Keri Hulme, *The Wine-Rich Arteries (2002) : Satb, Piano, Choral Music*, Auckland: D. Hamilton, 2002.

⁶¹⁴ Hooper, 'A Window Upon Mountains' 42-43.

⁶¹⁵ Keri Hulme, 'The Lagoon, The Bluff – the story of us all,' *Te Karaka* 52, Summer 2011.

⁶¹⁶ Peter Hooper, 'Pencilled by the Rain,' *Selected Poems* 38.

⁶¹⁷ Brunner, Thomas, and New Zealand Electronic Text Centre. *The Great Journey an Expedition to Explore the Interior of the Middle Island, New Zealand, 1846-8*. [Wellington]: NZETC 2007, 43.

that the pioneers had to undergo was the total absence of fresh meat.”⁶¹⁸ Elsie Locke’s classic children’s story *The Runaway Settlers* is one of the first to point up differences between Maori and European approaches to local food sources, later in *Beneath the Southern Cross* Graeme Sturgeon emphasises the importance of the seasonal harvesting of natural resources, a luxury unfamiliar and unavailable to explorers and goldminers with their more urgent imperatives. It seems ironic that the Coast now attracts thousands of people each year who pay to eat ‘wild food’ sourced from the local environment.⁶¹⁹

In contrast with Hooper’s stag people, who are wary of the coast and largely ignorant of its abundance, Hulme’s characters are ‘strand-dwellers’ as she herself is⁶²⁰, at home with the tide lines and familiar with the crustaceans, fish and seaweeds that abound there; in *The Bone People* Kerewin introduces herself “balanced on the salt-stained rim”⁶²¹ of a rock pool, wandering the beach listening to “Intermittent weeping flutes from oystercatchers”, stalking the tide’s edge until “a flounder flaps bloodyholed at the end of the stick,” thus establishing both her (Okarito) environment and her own inner monologue as central to the story. “I think it’s a basic physical fact of my life that I’d curl up and die if I was away from the sea for too long,”⁶²² Hulme admits. Although her home was on the east coast and her family base is Moeraki in Otago, she has been a Coaster since 1970 when she moved to Greymouth, living at Cobden and working as a ‘postie’ (a job she transferred from Christchurch), developing her writing skills and gradually building her three-storey home on the Okarito section she won in a land ballot. In an early Greymouth poem she polishes pounamu passed down from her great-grandfather, who was “a traveller, a refugee from this Coast”, but adds doubtfully “I don’t know whether I have come home”.⁶²³ She took part in occasional poetry readings at Walden Books in the 1970s (when Holman⁶²⁴ remembers her, Swanndri-clad, stunning the audience into awed silence with “Where are your bones? Whisper:/Moeraki: Purakanui: Arahura: / Okarito: Murihiku: Rakiura ...”⁶²⁵)

⁶¹⁸ Preshaw 107.

⁶¹⁹ The Hokitika Wild Foods Festival has been held annually since 1990.

⁶²⁰ Hulme, *Strands* (cover): “I am a strand-dweller in reality, a strand-loper of sorts.”

⁶²¹ Hulme, *Bone People* 13-14.

⁶²² Sarti, *Spiritcarvers* 66.

⁶²³ Keri Hulme, ‘Getting to the Coast,’ *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1982, 48.

⁶²⁴ Holman interview 17 January 2012.

⁶²⁵ Hulme, ‘E nga iwi o ngai tahu,’ *Silences* 25.

and added nine poems to Roger Ewer's 1979 collection *Coast Voices* under the heading 'Okarito Tuhituhia'.⁶²⁶ She writes of hiking into the hills, possum trapping, shovelling black sand "as the miners did" and "Wondered in my heart,/ Dunedin's good,/ Why come here?"⁶²⁷, but she made Okarito her base for nearly four decades, moving between there and Moeraki (where part of *The Bone People* is set), Christchurch and Oamaru (where her family live), various cities where she held literary residencies,⁶²⁸ and, at one stage, living a vaguely nomadic life in a campervan. Funding from The Maori Trust Fund Prize (1977); the ICI Writing Bursary (1983) and the New Zealand Writing Bursary (1983) followed by considerable prize moneys and royalties from *The Bone People*, which has been published internationally both in English and in translation, and consequent academic and political appointments⁶²⁹ have allowed her to write full time since the early 1980s.

Hulme has spoken in interviews of the dreams that haunted her since she was an 18-year-old hop picker in Motueka⁶³⁰, dreams that she began to articulate first as a short story called 'Simon Peter's Shell' and which finally informed *The Bone People*. Much of her writing in the 1970s and early 1980s contains material reworked in the novel: elements of Simon Gillayley's back story can be traced in 'One Whale Singing',⁶³¹ and, more specifically, 'A Drift in a Dream',⁶³² a short story about his "extremely Gothic parents"⁶³³, while different versions of his character appear in 'Hooks and Feelers',⁶³⁴ which won the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Award for 1975, and as Bird in 'A Nightsong for a Shining Cuckoo',⁶³⁵. In her first prose collection, *Te Kaihau/The Windeater*, eleven of the nineteen stories reference sea and coastline although only five are overtly set on the Coast; much of the work in her later collection, *Stonefish*, is more generically concerned with the physical and often metaphysical relationships between species and with the shifting of chronological and cultural boundaries. Her humour is often dark and sardonic, occasionally impish, as in

⁶²⁶ The Maori word 'tuhituhia' can be translated as 'writing'.

⁶²⁷ Keri Hulme, 'Towards a Motherlode' in Ewer 6.

⁶²⁸ Hulme was Writer in Residence at Otago University in 1978 and at the University of Canterbury in 1985.

⁶²⁹ Hulme served on the Literary Fund Advisory Council (1985-1989); the Indecent Publications Tribunal (1985-90); and as a 'cultural ambassador' for New Zealand.

⁶³⁰ Worthington, *Oxford Companion* 247.

⁶³¹ First published in *Broadsheet*, May 1976; n.39:p.20-25, reprinted in *Te Kaihau/The Windeater* 61-72.

⁶³² Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 195-209.

⁶³³ Sarti 60.

⁶³⁴ First published in *New Zealand Listener*, 1976, reprinted in *Te Kaihau* 77-90.

⁶³⁵ First published under the pseudonym 'Kai Tainui' in *Landfall* 138 (March 1981, pp 7-19), later in *Te Kaihau* 119-134.

‘Getting it’, which references her experience as a reporter of local body planning meetings when she worked for the *Greymouth Star*.

Her first poetry collection *The Silences Between*, reprinted before *The Bone People* made her famous, includes two of the poems from *Coast Voices*, each with minor changes of punctuation and layout: in ‘Nga Kehua’⁶³⁶ the singular ghost in *Coast Voices* becomes plural in *The Silences Between*; ‘October’⁶³⁷ is prefaced in the later publication by an old proverb, ‘E raro kore, e runga tinihanga’. It is a whakataurangi she has quoted more than once, and in *Hokitika Handmade* she offers a translation: “In the north, sparseness; in the south, richness”.⁶³⁸ Hulme is very much aware of Coast history but never obsessed by the more recent European past that informs others’ work: in her ‘Okarito Tuhituhia’ series she quotes from Mona Tracy (“It was raining and the road was full of ghosts”), but adds, “eyes blinded by rain,/ I couldn’t remember their shining past/of bottles and gold...”.⁶³⁹ She is more interested in the older history of rocks and legends, referencing Maui, in the eponymous story *Te Kaihau/The Windeater*, and Poutini as she introduces her second short story collection with a poem; “a stone that once swam/ ancient seas ... you/say ancestors and I breathe,/ Bones – ”.⁶⁴⁰ Her poems are often anthropomorphic, sometimes zoomorphic, always steeped in Maori legend and understanding: in ‘He Hoha’,⁶⁴¹ which begins, “Bones tuned, the body sings ...”, she is at once herself, “my earth’s child” and the earth itself, “the black hole, the den where katipo are busy spinning deadhavens”, as she talks of being lost in the city, the dead shining cuckoo a metaphor she has used more than once for the imbalance which only Tangaroa and Papatuanuku can restore.

Hulme is arguably the West Coast’s best known whitebaiter: she writes about them constantly, often with recipes; her first Coast-based short story⁶⁴² references her introduction to the fishery when she lived at Cobden in the early 1970s; the first poem in her ‘Okarito Tuhituhia’ records that, “whitebait with moonlit eyes/ are running up the

⁶³⁶ *Coast Voices* 7; *Silences* 27.

⁶³⁷ *Coast Voices* 5; *Silences* 51.

⁶³⁸ Hulme, Keri, Julia Brooke-White, and Hokitika Craft Gallery Co-operative Society. *Hokitika Handmade*. Hokitika: Hokitika Craft Gallery Co-operative Society Ltd, 1999, 5.

⁶³⁹ Ewer 10, ‘Okarito Tuhituhia’.

⁶⁴⁰ Hulme, *Stonefish* 1.

⁶⁴¹ Hulme, *Strands* 41-43; first published Witi Ihimaera and D Long (eds), *Into the World of Light*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1982.

⁶⁴² Hulme, ‘King Bait,’ *Te Kaihau* 37-42.

river”⁶⁴³; in 1993 she wrote a feature article on West Coast whitebaiting and whitebaiters for *New Zealand Geographic*⁶⁴⁴; in 2008 she used her regular column in the Ngai Tahu magazine *Te Karaka* to record and celebrate (again with a recipe) her 37th season of whitebaiting; “It is one of the great matters of my life and, while I call it a game, I do not take it lightly – All real games are matters of life and death”.⁶⁴⁵

For Hulme, food is often a metaphor: she is scathing about the “wheebles, quinges and codsballs”⁶⁴⁶ of the urban social circuit and in her preface to the 1984 edition of *The Bone People* she writes, “To those used to one standard, this book may offer a taste passing strange like the original mouthful of kina roe. Persist. Kina can become a favourite food”.⁶⁴⁷ In this novel, food, like words, is to be relished, respected, shared and savoured, at times with gluttonous abandon. The first impromptu meal she offers Joe Gillayley (flounders stuffed with celery and pineapple, served with a salad and baked potatoes) is outlined in menu-like detail⁶⁴⁸: he responds with a gift of muttonbirds which “steamed golden in their own rich fat”, for Kerewin and Simon to feast on.⁶⁴⁹ Kerewin knows how to make meals from dandelions, shellfish and wild mushrooms and, by extension and implication, how to operate outside the conventions, how not only to make do with what is there but also to respect, cherish and celebrate it. Their meals quickly become contests (a salad with fourteen different greens is trumped by a chowder with fourteen different fish species⁶⁵⁰) in which Joe and Kerewin demonstrate their independence and survival skills, but there is an edge of violence: Kerewin proffers a hammer in order to bash rock oysters open; a discussion about farming versus hunter-gathering is interrupted by Simon’s playing with matches⁶⁵¹; the underlying theme in much of Hulme’s writing is survival of the fittest and many of her stories explore the physical vulnerability of human and other species. Knives and stones are the weapons of choice and the ironies of killing for food are explored in often-graphic detail in stories such as ‘A Tally of the Souls of Sheep’⁶⁵² written as a

⁶⁴³ Ewer 5.

⁶⁴⁴ Keri Hulme and Peter Quinn (ills), ‘Bait!’, *New Zealand Geographic* 17, January-March 1993, 50-68.

⁶⁴⁵ Keri Hulme, ‘The Game of Fish, and Fishing,’ *Te Karaka*, Raumati 2008, 10.

⁶⁴⁶ Hulme, *Stonefish* 41.

⁶⁴⁷ Keri Hulme, ‘Standards in a non-standard book,’ reprinted in *Bone People*, London: Pan, 1986.

⁶⁴⁸ Hulme, *Bone People* 53.

⁶⁴⁹ Hulme, *Bone People* 58.

⁶⁵⁰ Hulme, *Bone People* 103-4.

⁶⁵¹ Hulme, *Bone People* 104.

⁶⁵² Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 43-60.

script (Hulme once worked as a television production assistant, an experience also reflected in 'Stations on the Way to Avalon'⁶⁵³).

For Hulme, there are no conflicts between respecting and using other species: "I cannot avoid strong-singing that special food pleasure, tītī," she writes⁶⁵⁴, "I revere, and hymn, the bird"; but the poem which follows describes the fledgling "flapping/ valiantly but/ strangled, whacked with a spanner,/ headbitten" and concludes "I relish your fat, sleek on your dark meat, suck/on your bones:/ I bow my head: thank you". She is a cheerfully-consistent pragmatist, knowing the sea "is remorseless. There is no humanity in it"⁶⁵⁵: during one interview she commented that while human life expectancy was, theoretically, around 100 years, "A sea anemone is, theoretically, immortal. I remember this each time I make some into soup".⁶⁵⁶

Her fascination with physical violence is a major theme underlying her work, although she is fully aware of and wary of its corrupting effect⁶⁵⁷: she is also deeply interested in human spirituality, has studied Catholic mysticism ("for a long time the working title for *The Bone People* was 'Strange Islands, Silent Music', which is a direct quotation from St John of the Cross."⁶⁵⁸); and one of her novels in progress explores human spirituality and pacifism.⁶⁵⁹ In the last two decades she has turned more frequently to non-fiction as a regular columnist in *Te Karaka*, an occasional journalist and interviewer (she wrote profiles on each of the 19 members of the Hokitika Craft Gallery Co-operative Society for their 1999 book *Hokitika Handmade*), and an essayist, contributing to books such as *Te Whenua, Te Iwi*⁶⁶⁰ which discuss New Zealand landscapes and lifestyles and *Fiordland*⁶⁶¹, a limited edition book of photographs for which she wrote the accompanying

⁶⁵³ Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 171-182.

⁶⁵⁴ Keri Hulme, 'Pipiri Te Whetu,' *Te Karaka* 47: Winter 2010.

⁶⁵⁵ Hulme, 'Unnamed Islands in the Unnamed Sea,' *Te Kaihau* 165.

⁶⁵⁶ Allan Thomson, *What I Believe : The Personal Philosophies of Twenty-Two New Zealanders*, Wellington: GP Publications, 1993, 80.

⁶⁵⁷ Hulme sat for five years on the Indecent Publications Tribunal.

⁶⁵⁸ Andrew Johnston, 'Keri Hulme: Of Death and Fishing', *Evening Post*, 5 November 1994.

⁶⁵⁹ Johnston, 'Keri Hulme'.

⁶⁶⁰ Jock Phillips, Keri Hulme, and Stout Research Centre, *Te Whenua, Te Iwi : the Land and the People*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press in association with the Stout Research Centre for the Study of New Zealand Society History and Culture, 1987.

⁶⁶¹ Andris Apse et al, *Fiordland*, Christchurch: GPD Pub, 2005.

text, and conducting readers around her three *Homeplaces*⁶⁶² (Okarito, Moeraki, Rakiura) with photographer Robin Morrison. Her essays, like her poems and many of her stories, are personally revealing and always she comes back to the rich resources of the sea coast; “Some of us count Okarito the navel of the universe,” she comments, referring back to Poutini Kai Tahu, Kati Mamoe, Kati Wairaki and even earlier settlers; “For, while gold is one kind of wealth, food is another”.⁶⁶³

Her knowledge of fish is encyclopaedic, her textbooks on the subject among her most treasured⁶⁶⁴, their names in both Maori and English (“O sing you of estuarine stargazer, dragonet and gudgeon”⁶⁶⁵) fuelling her love of words and wordplay (“You can load most words, but some are better than others,”⁶⁶⁶ she says of her short story title *Te Kaihau/The Windeater*.) Her descriptions are microscopic in detail and coloured with a painter’s eye; a girl cleaning flounder knows “The mottling of their skins, mosaics of rust and olive-green and sepia on the back, mushroom and grey and terracotta and lemon-blotched cream on the underside”;⁶⁶⁷ a commuter struggling with the airlessness and calcification of the city remembers when “the sea then was as variable as an opal, aquamarine and ultramarine and a strange pale lucid cream, with a bloom dark as a black grape near the horizon”.⁶⁶⁸ Her more recent work, in *Stonefish* and *Strands*, is more generic, less overtly Coast-based, pushing more boundaries of time and dimension, and there is a blurring of timelines that reflects her developing interest in social archaeology and her own whakapapa; but many of the stories are still frontier encounters with the natural world in which people survive rather than win.

She writes frequently of insects, echoing others’ fascination with the big bush moths that frequent the Coast; in Devanny’s *Poor Swine*, Julian Greville collects moths, and in Mona Tracy’s *West Coast Yesterdays* the ‘Moth Man’⁶⁶⁹ searches the Coast for rare species, setting carbide lamps at night to attract *Crambus*, *Declana egregia*, *Erana*

⁶⁶² Keri Hulme and Robin Morrison, *Homeplaces: Three Coasts of the South Island of New Zealand*, Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989.

⁶⁶³ Hulme, *Homeplaces* 9.

⁶⁶⁴ Keri Hulme, ‘A traditionalist to the last leaf,’ *Te Karaka* 49 at <http://www.tekaraka.co.nz/blog/Inside-49/keri-hulme>, viewed 26 February 2012.

⁶⁶⁵ Hulme, *Homeplaces* 10.

⁶⁶⁶ Sarti 63.

⁶⁶⁷ Hulme, ‘The Knife and the Stone,’ *Te Kaihau* 104.

⁶⁶⁸ Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 174.

⁶⁶⁹ Tracy 30-32.

graminosa, *Ipana leptoptera* which he painstakingly mounts on specimen boards, smoothing their feathers with a cat's whisker. In Hulme's 'Hatchings' a woman parallels the insects' cycles with her own family's cocoon-building, emerging and flying off, her own watching and waiting a metaphor for her empty marriage; in 'An Episode of Bagmoths' she describes (almost certainly autobiographically) a short-sighted child's fascination with "things that writhed oozily or scuttled away on a fringe of legs,"⁶⁷⁰ and in *The Bone People* she tells of the soul's long journey through the underworld and the final return as a moth⁶⁷¹. She is knowledgeable about spiders, using the image of cicadas that emerge from their husks, become singers and are then killed, to tell the story of a doomed girl;⁶⁷² creates a jewelled frame for her stories like "an old spiderweb Here an emerald shard of manuka beetle, there the plundered silken hold of a wolf-spider's egg-case; some delicate purple-blue, powdery blue tussock butterfly wings ...".⁶⁷³ Her writing picks over the minutiae of human existence, pausing to examine in many of her stories the different, the abnormal, the alien and the malformed of the species; in 'Kiteflying Party at Doctor's Point', she spells out "a theory about deformities. People are either fearful in the company of a monster, or they will worship it. Any other reaction is rare,"⁶⁷⁴ and at the same time emphasises her own preferred birds' eye view, swooping powerfully overhead, free of constraints. As always on a beach she lets the coast and the waves inform the emotions.

Like Devanny, she understands and writes about the secret strength of overtly powerless women, a recurring theme in stories such as 'The Knife and the Stone', 'Night Song for a Shining Cuckoo' and, later, 'Hinekaro Goes on a Picnic and Blows up Another Obelisk'. While Devanny's characters are invariably human, however, many of Hulme's inhabit other dimensions of the imagined world; in 'Kaibutsu-San' she uses electronic gaming as a metaphor for the pitfalls of materialism and in 'The Eyes of the Moonfish' she explores the implications of cultural invasion, in 'Getting it' and 'Floating Words' she considers the overarching importance of the natural environment and the consequences of neglecting it, in 'The Pluperfect Pā-Wā' she questions assumptions of superiority over other life forms; in each story relationships between homo sapiens and the land are

⁶⁷⁰ Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 219.

⁶⁷¹ Hulme, *Bone People* 354.

⁶⁷² Hulme, 'The Cicadas of Summer,' *Te Kaihau* 135-45.

⁶⁷³ Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 235.

⁶⁷⁴ Hulme, *Te Kaihau* 152.

challenged, in each of her collections links are made between past and present, the ancestors and the living; almost always carefully-prepared food, and in particular seafood, is part of the link.

Hulme's raw material is on the coastal fringe; more than any other Coast writer she knows how paua should be prepared, she knows the tiny blue eyes of live scallops, the kina roes and fat rich mussels in their black shells; her work is full of recipes, fishing tips, respectful interchanges with other species (as when she tells in careful detail how a hen trout bravely fought her hook and was released again⁶⁷⁵). Like her *alter ego* Kerewin she is "a fisher, a forager, a hunter-gatherer, not a farmer"⁶⁷⁶; where Hooper's poetry is grounded in trees, earth, planting and harvest, Hulme's "anthem is always the roll of the sea,"⁶⁷⁷ and her often-photographed persona as a self-sufficient, physically and intellectually capable loner with little interest in how others see her has done much to reinforce a West Coast stereotype.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman: 1947-

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman is a Christchurch academic and poet who spend his childhood in the Grey Valley and was inspired and encouraged to write by Peter Hooper, who taught him at Greymouth Technical High School. Holman returned to the Coast in the mid-1970s to live and work for a decade and much of his later work is informed by his experiences and relationships in those two periods. He has published six collections of poems and a book on ethnographer Elsdon Best⁶⁷⁸, the subject of his PhD thesis at the University of Canterbury where he is a Senior Adjunct Fellow, reviews both poetry and prose for a number of periodicals and is a regular contributor to both print and online literary magazines. His adoption of the name 'Paparoa' in the early 1990s reflects not only his interest in Māori culture and language, which he began to learn formally in 1998, but also his ongoing identification with the Coast, which is his chosen *turangawaewae*.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁵ Hulme, 'Fisher in an Autumn Tide,' *Strands* 57.

⁶⁷⁶ Hulme, *Bone People* 106.

⁶⁷⁷ Hulme, 'Pauashell Gods,' *Strands* 49.

⁶⁷⁸ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, *Best of Both Worlds: The Story of Elsdon Best and Tutakangahau*, North Shore: Penguin, 2010.

⁶⁷⁹ The Paparoa Ranges, a mountain system north of Greymouth, are part of the Paparoa National Park.

Like his mentor Peter Hooper, Holman was born in England (in his case London), came to New Zealand as a young boy and was aware of his heritage in both countries (his grandmother emigrated to New Zealand in 1919 with her second husband, referenced in the poem 'Forgetfulness,'⁶⁸⁰ before illness forced the family's return to London). His parents both served in the Royal Navy, his father as a yeoman of signals and his mother in the WRNS, and after World War Two his father transferred to the Royal New Zealand Navy, which recruited British crews to emigrate with its post-war fleet while many of their wives and families, including three-year-old Jeffrey and his brother, sailed on the *Rangitiki* to join them. They lived at Browns Bay while Jeffrey's father served in Korea, transferred to Christchurch where he served at the land-based naval training centre HMNZS Pegasus and later worked for a tyre company, moved to Ngahere on the West Coast where he worked on the railway track gang, and finally to Blackball where he got a job as a coal miner. Behind these frequent shifts of place and occupation was a dysfunctional husband and father struggling with the twin addictions of alcoholism and gambling. As a child Jeffrey suffered the harsh and sometimes bewildering consequences without understanding, but as an adult he used poetry to express his growing awareness and understanding of the tensions his family lived with, expressed most significantly in the poem 'As Big as a Father',⁶⁸¹ which he wrote in London twenty years after his father had died. The title came from the wartime announcement, repeated over again in newsreels, films and comic strips, that yet another ship had been 'lost': to Holman the adult it seemed ludicrous that something as big as a ship could be mislaid and when he finally wrote about the loss of his father the phrase resonated.⁶⁸²

For the Holman children, who had previously lived in urban centres, the move from Christchurch to the Grey Valley was like going back in time to a Huckleberry Finn-style frontier lifestyle where they were free to roam through bush and farmland, rivers and hills, and "there was no point/ in anything manmade beneath the ranges",⁶⁸³ the 'wild west' environment epitomised by the pandemonium of thundering hoofs, whips cracking, dogs barking and men swearing as the Hill brothers from Nelson Creek drove bush cattle

⁶⁸⁰ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, *Autumn Waiata*, Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2010 (unpaged).

⁶⁸¹ Holman, *As Big as a Father* 18.

⁶⁸² Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, interview 6 October 2011.

⁶⁸³ Holman, 'And what has life taught me?' *Autumn Waiata*.

through the main street of Ngahere to the stock yards.⁶⁸⁴ Holman and his brother played rugby league for Ngahere, then, a year later, swapped their blue and yellow jerseys for Blackball's red and black ones, learned to shoot possums and fish for eels and spent their adolescent years in a small, close-knit mining community where "rain could turn your dreams to mud".⁶⁸⁵ After two years at Blackball primary school Holman joined the other secondary school pupils on the NZR bus to Greymouth Technical High School, where he found the success and affirmation he looked for from his father. Like Peter Hooper and Bill Pearson before him, he was inspired by geography teacher Snowy Hutton, then over 65, who had served in the trenches in the First World War and, it seemed, been at Greymouth Tech ever since, teaching Jeffrey for four consecutive years. Hutton was a charismatic and eccentric teacher, a Gilbert and Sullivan fan with a powerful voice who was proud of the high pass rate among his pupils; the day Jeffrey sat his School Certificate geography exam he was sent in to the school hall with a slap on the back and a confident "Ninety percent, please!"

Hooper was Jeffrey's fifth form English teacher and also the school librarian; he not only nurtured his pupils' interests in books and literature with drama, poetry and prose but also, and for some more importantly, showed them by his own and others' examples that writing was more than simply creativity and involved voice, place, revision and ultimately publication.⁶⁸⁶ He taught that the voices of "Coast kids living on the wild margins"⁶⁸⁷ were valid, and told them to write about what they knew, "drawing from coal miner's sons and bus driver's daughters small fresh fragments of poetry that spoke of whitebaiting and the boredom of weekends trapped under relentless rain, floods and accidents, the heartbeats of our local world".⁶⁸⁸ Holman received a powerful and memorable lesson in writing when, as a senior school pupil, he spent a weekend at Hooper's house with his new music album, 'Another Side of Bob Dylan'. "I found he had got up early. After listening to my Dylan the night before and reading the beat poetry of his liner notes, Peter

⁶⁸⁴ Holman, interview.

⁶⁸⁵ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* 31.

⁶⁸⁶ Holman's first anti-war poem 'The Call of Death' was published in the Greymouth Tech Magazine, date unknown.

⁶⁸⁷ Jeffrey Paparoa. Holman, 'Peter Hooper: Why West Coast writing matters to me,' unpublished, 2009.

⁶⁸⁸ Holman, 'Peter Hooper'.

had written a series of thirteen short poems he called ‘Notes in the Margin’.”⁶⁸⁹ Thus began a friendship that lasted until Hooper’s death in 1991.

Holman left school early in his seventh form year, turning his back on the academic career path his teachers had mapped out and instead working as a ‘skiddy’ at a sawmill at Redjacks, near Ngahere. He spent several years on shearing gangs in the North Island and then in Australia, returning in 1970 to Christchurch where he enrolled at the University of Canterbury and took American history and literature with poet David Walker, who taught Whitman and Ginsberg in the newly-established American Studies Department. He began writing again, showing his work to Hooper, who published Holman’s Australian train poem ‘Indian Pacific’ (“only dust and distance/Measured the hollow feet/Of our boredom”) in *A Pleasure of Friends*,⁶⁹⁰ and to Walker who had been to Oxford, helped edit the university magazine *Canta* and “handed my work back with typed comments like a cold bath,”⁶⁹¹ but later became a friend and mentor: the two kept in contact long after Walker returned to the USA. Holman wrote a major assignment on American poet Theodore Roethke that year and also discovered Chilean poet Pablo Neruda’s work, sharing his discoveries with Hooper, whose early influences were British and who wrote, in his 1972 prose essay ‘Earth Light’, that reading Neruda “opened up an inexhaustible continent of riches”.⁶⁹²

Holman and his wife Theresa shared a house with writer David Young and graphic artist David Waddington, also University of Canterbury students, who between 1971 and 1974 published the Fragments series of free-format literary anthologies illustrated with black and white photographs: Hooper’s *Earth Light*, named for a poem by Holman which led the 40-page collection, was third in the series and Holman’s own collection ‘Strange Children’, paired with David Walker’s ‘Fathers’ in *Two Poets*, was the fifth and last. The work reflects his own situation: dropped out of university, his father dead and his marriage broken down, he was a solo parent working on the rubbish trucks and writing “until one of/ these poems shows the silver/ of working over”.⁶⁹³ He spent the next decade on the Coast where he was deeply involved in the alternative hippie culture of drugs, alcohol and rock

⁶⁸⁹ Holman, ‘Peter Hooper’. ‘Notes in the Margin’ was first published in Hooper, *Journey Towards an Elegy* 48-58.

⁶⁹⁰ Hooper, *Pleasure* 8.

⁶⁹¹ Holman, interview 6 October 2011.

⁶⁹² Hooper, *Earth Marriage*.

⁶⁹³ Holman, ‘Working Out,’ *Two Poets* 66.

music before turning to Christianity and the charismatic street-corner preaching that swept New Zealand in the early 1980s, but his only published writing in that period was four poems in the collection he edited for his community fellowship group⁶⁹⁴ after a writing seminar conducted by Peter Hooper; he later wrote in *Landfall*⁶⁹⁵ about the five years he worked in Runanga as a postman (in the tradition of James K Baxter, Keri Hulme and many other writers), earning the local nickname ‘God on Wheels’ for his habit of singing hymns as he rode around the town on his delivery bike.

He began writing seriously again several years after he and his family moved to England in 1985 and it was there, working in Waterstone’s Charing Cross bookshop from 1991 to 1996, reading voraciously and immersed in the literary world of author events, poetry readings and international academics, that the raw material of the West Coast was processed and developed in his poetry. Inspired by American writer Raymond Carver, also a recovering alcoholic from a blue-collar background, he attended writing courses, read creative writing books, wrote a great deal (working each lunch hour in a café near the bookshop while fellow New Zealander and graphic novelist Dylan Horrocks, also on the staff at Waterstone’s, did the same in another café). He submitted poems and short stories for publication with little success (one was shortlisted in a competition, others published in *Poetry Wales* and *Iron*) and eventually became discouraged, returning home on his own in 1997 with a portfolio of work and a fresh perspective on being a New Zealander. During his time in England several significant changes in his personal life impacted on his writing: he stepped back from his work within the Christian community in favour of secular employment; resolved internal conflicts between religious commitment and creative expression that had dogged him since 1979; reinforced his determination, dating from the same period, to remain alcohol and drug free; and finally, if belatedly, accepted Peter Hooper’s ‘blessing’, given in the early 1980s – when he had confessed he wanted to be a writer Hooper had said, in mild exasperation, “Jeff, you *are* a writer!”⁶⁹⁶ While he was in England Holman began reading from the New Zealand section in his local library: Janet Frame’s *An Angel at my Table*⁶⁹⁷, Dick Scott’s *Ask That Mountain*⁶⁹⁸ and Robert

⁶⁹⁴ Holman, *Out of His Treasures*.

⁶⁹⁵ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, ‘God on Wheels,’ *Landfall* 209, Autumn 2005, 156-7.

⁶⁹⁶ Holman, interview.

⁶⁹⁷ Janet Frame, *An Angel at My Table*, Auckland: Vintage, 1991.

Macdonald's *The Fifth Wind*⁶⁹⁹ in particular impacted powerfully, the former recalling him to his South Island upbringing, the last two providing a cultural awakening that made him hungry to learn more about contemporary Māori language and society. He returned to the University of Canterbury in 1997 to finish his interrupted degree and embarked on a new career as a writer and academic, publishing intermittently in literary journals such as *Zephyr*, *Takahe* and *Landfall*, where one of his few short stories, a vignette of daily life referencing a story by Anton Chekhov, appeared in 1998.⁷⁰⁰

Flood Damage, his self-published first collection since *Two Poets* in 1974, includes poems set in England and ten that are overtly about the Coast, including the chilling 'T-bar clothesline, Okarito' written during a trip home in 1991: the ubiquitous washing line strung between two T-shaped end posts becomes a framework on which to hang the often-violent plight of a woman trapped in an abusive relationship; in that isolated, male-dominated rural outpost of South Westland even the wildlife is sinister when "Bellbirds/ toll the flax, herons stalk/ the creek; eels grow tusks in the black lagoon".⁷⁰¹ 'October 1963', also about the harsher realities of rural living, is about taking the hard decision to destroy a dog that had bitten someone (later poems such as 'Lichen ochre',⁷⁰² also reference dogs) and, metaphorically, taking moral responsibility for a way of life. Four poems in particular from this collection reference the West Coast in the 1970s. 'Inferno (Strongman Mine 1978)', republished in *As Big as Father*, has found fresh relevance and was republished in *The Press* in the wake of the Pike River disaster of 2010. 'Reading the Sea' conveys the all-pervading awareness of living on a weather shore: the cultural stimulation of photos of London, literary icons such as Auden, hallucinogenic drugs and the exchange of ideas between musician and writer takes place against the steady rhythm of the waves, and in the end it is the sea that draws the creative spirit and is the catalyst: "I'm pumping, Robbie./ I circle the world/ and I roll these/ tubes for you".⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁸ Dick Scott, *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka*, Auckland: Reed/Southern Cross, 1981.

⁶⁹⁹ Robert Macdonald, *The Fifth Wind: New Zealand and the Legacy of a Turbulent Past*. London: Bloomsbury, 1989.

⁷⁰⁰ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 'Erysipelas,' *Landfall* 196, Spring 1998, 277-288.

⁷⁰¹ Holman, *Flood Damage* 24.

⁷⁰² Holman, *Autumn Waiata*.

⁷⁰³ Holman, *Flood Damage* 12.

Holman's powerful 'Nowhere in the Year of the Horse (for the Carver)' references two Coasters who impacted strongly on his life in the 'hippie' era of the 1970s when he lived at Dunollie, near Runanga, and worked as a psychiatric social worker at Hokitika's Seaview Hospital: the first is his partner Lee, with whom he lived from 1973 until 1978 when her car skidded on ice and left the road in the Otira Gorge; the second is greenstone carver Bill Mathieson whom he met as a patient at Seaview and who later took his own life. Lee's death, which left Holman with three children to care for, is recalled again in 'Holding Pounamu',⁷⁰⁴ (written in Cobden during a return to the Coast from England in 1990) and most recently in 'Plunging',⁷⁰⁵ ("Dropping down Otira Gorge, rain is my/ pōwhiri"), in which a Zen monk symbolises acceptance of the past. His relationship with Mathieson, referenced also in 'Story Creatures',⁷⁰⁶ and later in 'I Ching coin jade padlock',⁷⁰⁷ and 'Burning the Pictures',⁷⁰⁸ was irrevocably changed by his conversion to Christianity in 1979; not only did he turn his back on the alcohol and drugs which permeated the 'Coast Road',⁷⁰⁹ culture of the time but he also deliberately destroyed symbols of his earlier life including his portfolio of poetry, which he burned, and the handcrafted silver and jade padlock, a gift from Mathieson⁷¹⁰, which he cast into the Grey River because it incorporated an I Ching coin into the design.⁷¹¹

Holman's relationships with his own parents and his maternal grandmother, who came from England in the early 1950s to live with them until her death, are explored in two poems in *Flood Damage*: he describes 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder', in which his father's damaged hands are clues to his deeper wounds, as "an early rehearsal" for a memoir still to be published,⁷¹² while 'My Grandmother's Rubaiyat' signals her contribution as the keeper of their cultural heritage. The impact of World War Two on his family was significant and enduring; not only for his father, who served in "the rum-

⁷⁰⁴ Holman, *Big as a Father* 56-57.

⁷⁰⁵ Holman, *Autumn Waiata*.

⁷⁰⁶ Holman, *Flood Damage* 18.

⁷⁰⁷ Holman, *Big as a Father* 56.

⁷⁰⁸ Holman, *Big as a Father* 52-3.

⁷⁰⁹ "The Coast Road people" was Holman's own term for the alternative lifestylers who lived up and down the West Coast in significant numbers in the 1970s and early 1980s.

⁷¹⁰ Mathieson published *I Ching Supplement* in 1978 and has four poems in *Coast Voices*.

⁷¹¹ Holman, interview 18 January, 2012.

⁷¹² Holman, interview 18 January, 2012.

running Navy”⁷¹³ throughout the war, at one point watching from his post on the bridge of an aircraft carrier as a Japanese kamikaze pilot was shot down seconds before he hit the ship,⁷¹⁴ but also for his mother and grandmother who endured and survived the Liverpool blitz, a series of German air raids that killed 4,000 people between August 1940 and May 1941. That all three were not only survivors but also victims became clear to Holman in hindsight and not only pointed up the different nature of his English background, his family carefully silent when Blackball locals talked of wartime rationing and other hardships, but informs much of the language and imagery in his later poetry: the sailor’s vulnerability is underscored when “death’s head torpedoes/ blew out of the water/ the skiff of my father”;⁷¹⁵ his mother’s experiences are recalled “in the war/ with that incendiary Garbo hair”;⁷¹⁶ his grandmother’s storytelling echoes in “the *putt-putt-putt* motorbike-in-the-sky sound Nanny never forgot”.⁷¹⁷ This latter recalls the elderly woman’s experiences in London after the D-Day invasion, when German V-weapons terrorised the civilian population until Allied forces overran the launch sites.

Flood Damage was launched at Formerly The Blackball Hilton,⁷¹⁸ one of the last surviving hotels in the town where Holman grew up and where he returned in a pilgrimage described in ‘Pararoa karanga mai/ One long mother calling’.⁷¹⁹ “What can I write about this place to halfway/ do it justice?” he asks, underscoring his visceral attachment to the Coast where he has lived for barely half his life but where he has chosen to name his mountain, plant his feet and place his work. His third book of poetry, *As Big as a Father*, continues the theme in a carefully-crafted collection compiled after he had attended Rob Jackaman’s poetry course at the University of Canterbury in 1998, and workshopped by Bernadette Hall and James Brown (who was writer-in-residence the following year): the title poem won the 1997 Whitireia Poetry Competition judged by Sam Hunt, and the

⁷¹³ Holman, *Big as a Father* 18-19.

⁷¹⁴ Material relating to this incident, recorded in a photograph Holman’s father carried in his wallet, forms part of a memoir still in progress.

⁷¹⁵ Holman, *Big as a Father* 19.

⁷¹⁶ Holman, ‘We’ll meet,’ *Autumn Waiata*.

⁷¹⁷ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, ‘Rocket Engines,’ *Flyboy*, Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2010, 16.

⁷¹⁸ The hotel (originally The Dominion) was named The Blackball Hilton, after a former licensee, until 1982 when the American Hilton Hotel chain objected; to the delight of the locals, proprietor Jane Wells renamed it Formerly The Blackball Hilton.

⁷¹⁹ Holman, *Big as a Father* 34-35.

collection opens with ‘The last Huron language speaker,’ a lament for the lost voices of indigenous people.

Section II, ‘Papatipu’, relates to Te Tai Poutini/The West Coast and its people as do most of the poems in Section III, ‘E Hine E’, which are love songs: for Lee who was killed on the road; his first wife Theresa who returned after Lee’s death to “that West Coast/ lean-to shack, coal fire stoking”;⁷²⁰ his second wife Jeanette, who is also a Coaster;⁷²¹ and his mother, who saved him from drowning in the Grey River when he was a child and “hailed me up on the deck of her boat”.⁷²² Many of Holman’s poems openly refer to people in his life: ‘Talking about Matthew’⁷²³ is about Mervyn and Anne Thompson’s son; ‘Hardcase, eh?’⁷²⁴ tells of the hard boozy world of the 1960s shearing gangs and a mate who died in a car accident; ‘The Boy’⁷²⁵ is for Roy McGlashen, a retired miner whose photo is on the cover of the book and whose solitary bachelor life, revealed over cups of tea when Holman was the Runanga postman, was typical of many such men in mining and sawmilling communities in the rural New Zealand of the mid-1900s. In this last poem the writer juxtaposes the old Imperial map of the world, with its British colonies coloured pink, with the harsh story of physical abuse, to underline the universal politics of power and bullying⁷²⁶, a theme that recurs in Coast literature.

Holman’s 2004 collection, *The Late Great Blackball Bridge Sonnets*, inspired by *New Zealand Listener*’s 2002 publication of an incorrectly-captioned photograph of the old Blackball bridge which was destroyed by flood in “One full/ Westerly too many, the Mother-to-end-all floods”,⁷²⁷ is inscribed in memoriam to “Bill Pearson 1922-2002, author of *Coal Flat*”: like Pearson’s novel, it uses an intimate knowledge of the life and character of a West Coast coalmining town to tell the more generic story of working-class New Zealand in the mid-1900s. The *Blackball Bridge Sonnets* are written in two-line stanzas and syllabic sonnet form, basically iambic although seldom rhymed, echoing the form of James

⁷²⁰ Holman, ‘Tuna,’ *Big as Father* 58.

⁷²¹ Holman, ‘Hard Travel to Arahura,’ *Big as a Father* 60.

⁷²² Holman, ‘I set out with greenstone (ii),’ *Big as a Father* 63.

⁷²³ Holman, *Big as a Father* 47.

⁷²⁴ Holman, *Big as a Father* 43.

⁷²⁵ Holman, *Big as a Father* 44.

⁷²⁶ Holman, interview 6 October 2011.

⁷²⁷ Holman, ‘Flood Damage,’ *Flood Damage* 35.

K Baxter's *Jerusalem Sonnets*⁷²⁸ on which they are modelled in "a kind of unconscious mihi to Baxter"⁷²⁹. They were written consecutively over an eight-month period which included a trip to California, where distance of place as well as time facilitated the merging of personal and anecdotal experience. "It's no more crazy to talk to a bridge than to talk to yourself, the bridge became a metaphor for walking back into the past."⁷³⁰

It was also a way of corralling and working with memories, of getting Blackball down on paper in a way that brought to life "the Dutchman deli from Greymouth with a van full of pies and tiny/ pickled onions, the fish-man, the boozy butcher/ from Nelson Creek".⁷³¹ the narrative begins with the bridge "that led me everywhere",⁷³² and builds, as the boy narrator matures, from preoccupations of school bus and Friday night movies to the day the roof fell in at Roa, ("A trouser cuff, a/ leg, a broken man"⁷³³), the beat rap of Dylan's music and the death of the town with "the pit shut down and nobody's buying".⁷³⁴ There are glimpses of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood* in the rhythm of lines such as: "sailor/sick for the sea's bleak muse, singing you home to the sea god's throne"⁷³⁵ and in the sense of soaring over the town with its "mine mouth, railway line/ and barn-like bins";⁷³⁶ there is symbolism in the number of sonnets (45s was a popular card game among blue-collar New Zealanders in the mid-century), and the volume ends not only by tolling the ancestors, in a 'found poem' taken from gravestones in the Blackball cemetery, but also with a hint of Biblical resurrection.⁷³⁷

Blackball has, like much of the West Coast, become mythologized; not only by Eric Beardsley's 1984 novel *Blackball 08*, which brought the historical beginnings of the Labour movement into the consciousness of a newly-politicised generation, but also by the educated and highly articulate 'incomers' of the last three decades who include a surprising

⁷²⁸ James K Baxter and Colin Durning, *Jerusalem Sonnets : Poems for Colin Durning*, Dunedin: Bibliography Room, University of Otago, 1970.

⁷²⁹ Holman, interview 18 January, 2012.

⁷³⁰ Holman, interview 18 January, 2012.

⁷³¹ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (vi) 15.

⁷³² Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (i) 9.

⁷³³ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (xxviii) 41.

⁷³⁴ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (xli) 64.

⁷³⁵ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (xi) 63.

⁷³⁶ Holman, *Blackball Bridge* (xi) 67.

⁷³⁷ The last line is a quote from Song of Solomon 2:13 in Holy Bible (King James version).

number of published writers⁷³⁸ and whose annual May Day celebrations⁷³⁹ involve more red flags than were ever seen there in Pat Hickey's day, and at least as much rhetoric. Holman's positioning of himself in the new tradition of Pākehā Māori, however, allows him to claim Blackball as his marae and, as Patrick Evans points out, to "explore a quintessentially Māori-free lifestyle from a quintessentially Māori point of view",⁷⁴⁰ a perspective reinforced in *The Late Great Blackball Bridge Sonnets* by the acknowledgments to tāngata whenua and tūpuna which preface the poems.

Holman completed his doctoral thesis on ethnographer Elsdon Best in 2007,⁷⁴¹ followed by the book *Best of Both Worlds*, and in 2010 published his next portfolio of work in two subject-based collections, *Fly Boy* with Steele Roberts, *Autumn Waiata* with Cold Hub Press. In *Autumn Waiata*, 'Universal Hone',⁷⁴² acknowledges and farewells poet Hone Tuwhare, whose collection *Come Rain, Hail*⁷⁴³ Holman bought at Hooper's Greymouth bookshop in 1970, as a major influence⁷⁴⁴ on his own development as a poet. 'Elsdon Best is my eel trap' references his historical research; and 'Back to Devonport (26th April 2001)', dedicated to Bill Pearson, whom he interviewed before his death in 2002, recalls his father's RNZN days; the ten poems for which the book is titled are reflections around the University of Canterbury campus where he works. *Fly Boy* records his life-long passion for aircraft, sparked when he flew for the first time as a child,⁷⁴⁵ reinforced when he was given a toy aircraft carrier for Christmas⁷⁴⁶ and again when as a schoolboy he joined the Air Training Corps and was rewarded for diligence with a flight up the Grey Valley in an Auster:⁷⁴⁷ the collection is structured around a treasured childhood encyclopaedia of

⁷³⁸ For example Paul Maunder, Marlene Bennetts, Rona Adshead, Brian Wood, the Blackball History Group.

⁷³⁹ The centennial May Day celebrations of 2008, which included seminars, performances and a street parade, were attended by over 150 people including at least five sitting MPs, a number of academics and the Wellington-based women's trade union group Choir Choir Pants on Fire.

⁷⁴⁰ Evans 200.

⁷⁴¹ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 'Best of Both Worlds : Elsdon Best and the Metamorphosis of Māori Spirituality, Te Painga Rawa O Ngā Ao Rua : Te Peehi Me Te Putanga Kē O Te Wairua Māori,' PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 2007.

⁷⁴² First published in Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 'No Ordinary Son,' *The Press*, 19 January 2008, D15.

⁷⁴³ Hone Tuwhare, *Come Rain Hail : Poems*, Dunedin: Bibliography Room, University of Otago, 1970.

⁷⁴⁴ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 'Ka heke a runga: hard rain; The Bible in Māori' in *Ka Mate Ka Ora*, Sept 2008, n6, 127-130 at http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/kmko/06/ka_mate06_holman.pdf.

⁷⁴⁵ Holman, 'DC-3, Whenuapai,' *Fly Boy* 33.

⁷⁴⁶ Holman, 'Aircraft Carrier Deck Plans: Britain,' *Fly Boy* 25.

⁷⁴⁷ Holman, 'Antarctic Auster,' *Fly Boy* 37.

aeroplanes⁷⁴⁸ with further sections on birds and later planes; behind the framework of fly past and flight path the twin themes of a West Coast childhood and a father's war service are ever present and there is a strong sense that there is more to say on both subjects.

Holman is currently engaged in the ongoing dialogue of multi-cultural literature, writing about Pike River, and researching the kamikaze incident of 1945, the faded and crumpled photograph his father showed mates at the Blackball Workingmen's Club proving as elusive a clue as his nicotine-stained, marlin-spike-crushed fingers to the dysfunctional relationships of so many post-war children: over on the Coast, as elsewhere, torpedoes still "hiss like steam through/our clay foundations".⁷⁴⁹

Peter Robert Hawes: 1947-

Peter Hawes is a Palmerston North-based playwright, scriptwriter, novelist, actor and columnist whose roots are on the West Coast: he has drawn on Coast history and themes in five of his six novels, one major play and several of his children's books. He is a prolific writer known for exuberant public performance, frequently taking singing as well as acting roles at the Centrepont Theatre in Palmerston North where several of his own plays have been performed, and his often-flamboyant appearance has been photographed and caricatured to promote his work. Hawes has been called "New Zealand's foremost current exponent of the comedy of ideas",⁷⁵⁰ and much of his writing in the 1980s and early 1990s identifies as 'theatre of the absurd', the term coined by Martin Esslin⁷⁵¹ in discussing European playwrights from the 1940s, such as Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and Eugene Ionesco, whose work concerns the meaninglessness, uncertainty, and pointless absurdity of human existence. His later work tends more towards realism as he draws on personal experience and local knowledge.

Born on 30 September 1947 in Westport, Hawes spent several years of his childhood in England, where his father Bob played rugby league professionally for Bradford Northern, before the family returned to Westport, where most of them still live. After completing a BA at the University of Canterbury, he worked as a television reporter,

⁷⁴⁸ Henry Sampson (ed), *The Dumpy Book of Aircraft and the Air*, London: Sampson Low, 1955.

⁷⁴⁹ Holman, 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,' *Flood Damage* 22.

⁷⁵⁰ Richard Corballis, *Robinson 231*.

⁷⁵¹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, New York: Doubleday, 1961.

then moved to Barcelona, where he lived for four years and where his best-selling first novel *La Hoguera*⁷⁵² (The Bonfire), about the Spanish Inquisition, was published with the help of a translator. Back in New Zealand he continued his work in television, which included making documentaries on other New Zealand writers such as Robert Lord,⁷⁵³ Alan Duff⁷⁵⁴ and Lynley Dodd,⁷⁵⁵ into the 1990s, but he also wrote plays, some of which were commissioned by the Court Theatre and first performed there, and he was writer in residence at Wellington's Downstage theatre in 1984. The first three plays, 'Alf's General Theory of Relativity' (first performed at the Court Theatre, 1981), 'Ptolemy's Dip' (Court Theatre, 1982) and 'Armageddon Revisited' (Mercury, 1983) were comedies of the absurd: later scripts, however, drew on aspects of New Zealand social history. 'Goldie: A Good Joke' was performed at Wellington's Downstage Theatre in 1987, followed by 'Aunt Daisy' (Downstage, 1989), and '1946 The Boat Train' (Christchurch Arts Network, 1991). At least three other plays ('The 1944 Olympic Games', 'A Higher Form of Killing' and 'The Inquisition Dies') have yet to be performed.

In 1979 Hawes' first children's book *Animals for the Asking* was published by Whitcoulls and in 1984 it was followed with *More Animals for the Asking*.⁷⁵⁶ These quirky, nonsense verses for older primary-aged children cover an eclectic range of animals from the giraffe, rhinoceros and other zoo exhibits to the humble hedgehog ("A hedgehog's just a gorsebush/With a guinea pig inside"), sheep, whale, sloth and bumblebee: illustrations by David Johnstone add to the absurdist nature of the 15 poems, which utilise recognisably New Zealand expressions such as "by crikey"⁷⁵⁷. Hawes returned to children's books in 2003 and 2004 with the 'Fame Files' series, published by Whitcoulls, which like his animal verses are deliberately quirky and irreverent history texts aimed at upper primary children. Poetry, song, cartoon and quiz form part of the narrative, and each profile ends with a brief 'Fact File' which, without diverging from the informal style,

⁷⁵² Peter Hawes, *La Hoguera*, Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores, 1975.

⁷⁵³ Peter Hawes, Frances Weston and Television New Zealand, 'Robert Lord, Obituary,' Video recording, Television New Zealand: Lower Hutt, 1992.

⁷⁵⁴ Peter Hawes, Frances Weston and Television New Zealand, 'Alan Duff,' Video recording, Television New Zealand: Lower Hutt, 1991.

⁷⁵⁵ Peter Hawes, Frances Weston and Television New Zealand. 'Lynley Dodd,' Video recording, Television New Zealand: Lower Hutt, 1992.

⁷⁵⁶ Peter Hawes and David Johnstone (ills), *More Animals for the Asking*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1984.

⁷⁵⁷ Hawes, 'Goldfish,' *More Animals*.

provides dates, fates and other historical detail. The six books in the series, published during 2003 and 2004, cover famous figures from all over the world, including Australia and New Zealand: Captain Cook, Sir Edmund Hillary, Robert Burke and William Wills feature in *Adventurers & Explorers*;⁷⁵⁸ the Maungatapu Murderers are recorded in *Outlaws & Rogues*⁷⁵⁹ alongside Robin Hood, Ned Kelly and Blackbeard; *Warriors & Conquerors*⁷⁶⁰ includes both Napoleon Bonaparte and Te Rauparaha, and *Inventors & Scientists*⁷⁶¹ includes Richard Pearse and Ernest Rutherford. His other 'Fame Files' books are *Leaders & Emperors*⁷⁶² and *Risk Takers & Record Breakers*.⁷⁶³

In *Outlaws and Rogues*, Hawes begins his version of the Maungatapu incident with a song explaining how Richard Burgess and Thomas Kelly, ticket-of-leave convicts from Sydney who committed their first murders on the Otago goldfields, met up with Joseph Sullivan and Philip Levy in Hokitika ("We share that interest, Dick, with you,/Cos we like bashing brains out too!"⁷⁶⁴) to become New Zealand's most notorious bushrangers. He describes how they ambushed and killed respected surveyor George Dobson on a lonely road near Greymouth, mistaking him for banker Edwin Fox ("The gang had just committed New Zealand's first celebrity murder!"⁷⁶⁵) and their lesser-known plan to rob the Westport bank (foiled when they surreptitiously disembarked from the steamer *Wallaby* en route to Nelson only to discover that, in fact, "No one had deposited a bank there"⁷⁶⁶) before recording the gang's later Nelson-based crimes, arrests, trials and punishments.

In 1994 he was writer in residence at Massey University in Palmerston North and the following year he published his first novel in English, *Tasman's Lay*⁷⁶⁷, an irreverent account of Abel Tasman's discovery of New Zealand told through the eyes of a six-foot Balinese interpreter called Nyoman whose gender is carefully unspecified through most of the narrative and whose first encounter with the mirror-images of trees and mountains in

⁷⁵⁸ Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Adventurers & Explorers, The Fame Files*;1, Auckland: Whitcoulls, 2003.

⁷⁵⁹ Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Outlaws & Rogues, The Fame Files*;3, Wellington: Whitcoulls, 2003, 87-96.

⁷⁶⁰ Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Warriors & Conquerors, The Fame Files*;5, Auckland: Whitcoulls, 2004.

⁷⁶¹ Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Inventors & Scientists, The Fame Files*; 2, Auckland: Whitcoulls, 2003.

⁷⁶² Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Leaders & Emperors, The Fame Files*; 4, Auckland: Whitcoulls, 2004.

⁷⁶³ Peter Hawes and Grant Cole (ills), *Risk Takers & Record Breakers, The Fame Files*; 6, Auckland: Whitcoulls, 2004.

⁷⁶⁴ Hawes, *Outlaws* 88.

⁷⁶⁵ Hawes, *Outlaws* 91.

⁷⁶⁶ Hawes, *Outlaws* 91.

⁷⁶⁷ Peter Hawes, *Tasman's Lay*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1995.

South Westland fjord in December 1642 so disconcerts her that she falls overboard and has to be rescued.⁷⁶⁸ Hawes credits the *Heemskerck*, specifically a fine old Englishman named Lord Romsay who lives in the hold and tends the livestock, with the accidental introduction of bats to South Westland and, more significantly, the tiny, black, vicious bloodsucking ‘Solo River flies’ he keeps on board to feed them. As the European explorers view and assess the West Coast from the sea without actually landing, as later navigators continued to do, Hawes is inventive and deliberately provocative in his descriptions of “great grey breakers that smashed themselves into yellow, vomit-like spume upon the log-strewn beaches”⁷⁶⁹ and, at Okarito, “on the moss-bearded trees overlooking blackwater swamps hunkered many of those bad-tempered parasitic albino herons so common in the ricefields of the Deng Plateau”,⁷⁷⁰ and he underlines the point that colonists are blinkered by their own expectations and imperatives: “If I were a continent and continents could speak, I would have shouted invective at this imperious barque plodding past me.”⁷⁷¹ His most joyous contribution to the comedy of the absurd in this novel is, however, Tasman’s response to the beautiful mountain towering above the others, whose “three spiked peaks” were contoured in silver by the rising sun.⁷⁷² After an argument over how to name the new country (‘New Zeelandt’ is rejected because it had already been used in New Guinea, so it is agreed the land must be the other end of the continent of Statenlandt previously discovered by Le Maire near South America and it is accordingly designated ‘New Company Statenlandt’). Tasman decides it is unsafe to land and plant a flag so the best course of action is to consecrate a cannonball and symbolically fire it ashore, with the inevitable consequence; the shot hits and demolishes the southern and highest corner of the great mountain, anticipating Sir Edmund Hillary’s famous comment over three centuries later.⁷⁷³

As they proceed up the West Coast Tasman and his shipmates encounter (without naming them) giant squid, a moa (which the ship’s master concludes is a sixteen-foot warrior with a large nose, a feather cloak and an extremely long neck), the Taramakau

⁷⁶⁸ Hawes, *Tasman’s* 119.

⁷⁶⁹ Hawes, *Tasman’s* 126.

⁷⁷⁰ Hawes, *Tasman’s* 131.

⁷⁷¹ Hawes, *Tasman’s* 133.

⁷⁷² Hawes, *Tasman’s* 133.

⁷⁷³ After he and Tensing Norgay became the first men to reach the summit of Mt Everest on 29 May, 1953, Hillary is widely reported to have said, “We knocked the bastard off!”

River, which they attempt unsuccessfully to enter, and Farewell Spit, which they work their way round in company with the *Zeehaen*. By this stage, Hawes is paraphrasing the real Tasman's journal to comedic effect; where Tasman mentions smoke rising in several places 'where the inhabitants were making fire', Hawes describes entire forests on fire: "Smoke stacked itself into the sky in rolling bales of ugly brown flattened out against some invisible impediment until the entire gigantic structure assumed the shape of a dry-rot toadstool".⁷⁷⁴

The first meeting with Maori, paddling double canoes and with their black hair tied in Japanese-style topknots, and the infamous fight at Murderer's Bay are described almost in Tasman's own words, the names of the actual four victims recorded and in the aftermath of the massacre the two sailing ships are lost and drifting (as 'flying Dutchmen') in what is now Tasman Bay, passing and re-passing the same small island inhabited by miniature dragons,⁷⁷⁵ their officers grappling with the suspicion that the new land might not be as vast as has been assumed and that they are being propelled by greater forces. With missionary arrogance they come to the conclusion that, just as the continental mass of the northern hemisphere must logically be balanced by a vast land mass in the south, so the new continent must provide a spiritual counterweight to the goodness of "people like us" and therefore be inherently evil: *ergo* they have died and gone to Hell.⁷⁷⁶

Tasman's Lay contains classic elements of absurdist writing: the protagonists are drifting in unknown territory without meaning or purpose and therefore communication is disjointed and often surreal. The roles of Nyoman the translator, who speaks all languages and draws on previous reincarnations (as a tiger, an Egyptian bricklayer and a millipede, to name but a few), and her confidant Dilap the Watcher who can see over horizons, are to shift time and space in an incomprehensible universe and at the same time to make connections between historical reality and existentialist fiction. Hawes plays with language, history, legend and classical texts to comment on New Zealanders' cultural preoccupations, positioning the nation in general and the West Coast in particular as part of the larger universe and at the same time entirely peripheral to it: when Nyoman and Dilap

⁷⁷⁴ Hawes, *Tasman's* 173.

⁷⁷⁵ A reference to the tuatara of Stephens Island

⁷⁷⁶ Hawes, *Tasman's* 183.

release a Maori warrior (“more of a weapon than a human”⁷⁷⁷) from captivity on board the *Zeehaen*, they establish that he descends from the Asian leader Mao who, as they know from the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, fled south to establish a new tribe called Houyhnhnms, that they came to Statenland in four canoes from an island called Hawaiki because there was good fishing to be had, and that Nyoman was once this warrior’s brother.

This first novel was quickly followed by *Leapfrog with Unicorns*,⁷⁷⁸ a satirical work based on material gathered in the mid-1980s when Hawes was associate director of a documentary film about the way in which the world’s genetic plant resources, usually owned by third world countries, are almost exclusively controlled by multinational corporations.⁷⁷⁹ Like the documentary, *Leapfrog with Unicorns* examines the political, social and economic implications of scientific plant husbandry, but the novel is an absurdist comedy teasing out the subject by pitting an intelligent North American Indian woman against a double-crossing New Zealander who brings genetically modified corn seeds back to Palmerston North and, with the help of his drinking cronies, a forged treaty document and the cheerfully bogus Ngati Harakeke tribe, holds the chancellor of Massey University to ransom by claiming title to the entire agricultural college. The chemically-enhanced crop is destroyed by an American Stealth bomber, but by then the seeds have been disseminated far and wide by a pair of biologically-modified and carefully-trained sheep. Intriguingly, and for Hawes autobiographically, the main protagonist leaves New York and heads for Granity on the West Coast, by implication a stable safe haven in an insane world. “Absolutely no reason to go there,”⁷⁸⁰ she’d been told by an English documentary film maker, but his aunt, who lives there, is sure to be baking scones, and, by the end of the book, it becomes the most attractive option.

This global positioning of the West Coast of the South Island as part of a larger universe is a recurring theme for Hawes, who seeks neither to contrast nor compare the Coast, or New Zealand for that matter, with other geographical regions but rather to contextualise them: Okarito or Murderer’s Bay, Granity or Westport are as central to his universe as Phoenix, Granada, New York and Palmerston North, and, as in *Tasman’s Lay*,

⁷⁷⁷ Hawes, *Tasman’s* 199.

⁷⁷⁸ Peter Hawes, *Leapfrog with Unicorns*, Auckland, Vintage New Zealand, 1996.

⁷⁷⁹ ‘The Neglected Miracle’, Pacific Films, 1985, directed by Barry Barclay.

⁷⁸⁰ Hawes, *Leapfrog* 131.

by making his characters politely curious visitors (Tasman arrives by ship, Morgan by air) he points out the provincialism of national icons. As she dines aboard her Air New Zealand flight Morgan is served pavlova and notes that “hey, they had kiwifruit down there too”.⁷⁸¹ Later, she muses on the self-sufficiency of New Zealanders and their consequent low level of social interaction, commenting that their houses remind her of the toolbox in a Lada because “within them ... was everything needed to carry out a life”.⁷⁸²

After *Tasman's Lay*, published by Hazard Press, Hawes became a Random House author and his subsequent novels are all published under their Vintage imprint. *Playing Waterloo*, his third New Zealand novel, is a ‘cyber history’ featuring the history and geography of the West Coast as the backdrop to a major battle between two famous military leaders, Napoleon Bonaparte and Te Rauparaha.⁷⁸³ The battle is a ‘Histsim’ or simulated history created by 18-year-old Douglas Tull who, with his Algorithmic Reverse Packer (ARP) computer, has worked out how to cash in on the Internet: he installs himself and his computer in a luxury hotel in Puerto Rico and recreates the past on demand for extreme war-gaming enthusiasts. The Battle of Waterloo, his 40th Histsim and the biggest ever, involves a rich French filmmaker and an eminent English academic playing the key roles of Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington, and incidentally vying for the attentions of the Englishman’s extremely glamorous movie star wife Tippi Voss, with a large audience of fee-paying historians in period costume following the action. But there are problems with the computer.

The final battle is fought in the New Zealand bush, where Te Rauparaha confronts the invader Napoleon Bonaparte when he arrives off the coast of Kawatiri in his ship *Bellerophon*. “What do you think of my country?” Te Rauparaha asks a captured French warrior, and is told it is very empty, to which he replies, “Only to people who look for what is not there”.⁷⁸⁴ The Maori chief puts his finger unerringly on the issue – Napoleon is experienced at big set piece battles, not at small engagements, but bush warfare is Te Rauparaha’s forte. He is in Te Tai Poutini by right of conquest, his people having defeated local chief Tuhuru in battle, and he has come down from the north to exercise his right of

⁷⁸¹ Hawes, *Leapfrog* 212.

⁷⁸² Hawes, *Leapfrog* 247.

⁷⁸³ Hawes later included both leaders in his children’s history text *Warriors and Conquerors*.

⁷⁸⁴ Hawes, *Waterloo* 134.

occupancy by ahi kaa – keeping the fires burning. Tuhuru, who in history had the status of honoured hostage, is in this novel reluctant adviser to Napoleon, while the wretched and ineffectual Prince Regent, who has fled to New Zealand with his father George III just ahead of the French forces, cowers in the Maori camp at Kawatiri pa. Hawes provides a back story of rivalry with Hongi Hika in the north, bowdlerises Te Rauparaha's famous haka, discusses the Maui legends and introduces Cornelis Joppen⁷⁸⁵ as a marine on board *Bellerophon*, performing similar historical gymnastics with British, French and American personalities and relationships while keeping the thread of his futuristic computer-gaming narrative. His West Coast landscapes are accurate and anthropomorphic. "Ahead of him, the thrush-coloured swamp curls upwards into a hill, then dries into a headland ... yellow, fang-shaped mountains grin like a jawbone".⁷⁸⁶ "The damnable sky seems to be everywhere. It has even lowered itself into the forest and blazes in strips and patches among the trees. The trees, the hills, the land beneath his feet have been bled of other colour by the sour wind".⁷⁸⁷ Napoleon's surveyors discover gold in abundance but very little food (the French find seals unpalatable and muttonbirds worse), and the Coast is likened to "a vessel afloat on a vast sea, 1000 kilometres from anywhere".⁷⁸⁸ In this context, the value of British sovereignty and the reasons for fighting become unimportant to the ordinary soldiers, just as land claims and the New Zealand wars were irrelevant to the Coast's goldminers. Te Rauparaha is indisputably the winner in cyberspace, outsmarting both the British and the French forces, while in a parallel universe the young computer 'geek' Douglas Tull outsmarts both his playing customers to win the favours of Tippi Voss.

As in *Tasman's Lay*, much of Hawes' satire underlines the differing perspectives of 'outsiders', who import and impose their own infrastructure and values systems on what they perceive as an empty landscape, and indigenous occupants who struggle to make sense of their visitors' actions. This narrative is much more coherent in its structure, however, and while the comic elements predominate, the author has moved from the absurdist 'lost in the universe' scenario to a more fully-connected narrative which, by manipulating cyberspace to remove barriers of time, distance and culture, at once satirises colonial

⁷⁸⁵ The quartermaster on Abel Tasman's ship *Zeehaen*, Joppen was one of four sailors killed by Maori at Murderer's Bay.

⁷⁸⁶ Hawes, *Waterloo* 24.

⁷⁸⁷ Hawes, *Waterloo* 26.

⁷⁸⁸ Hawes, *Waterloo* 141.

politics and gives New Zealand Maori a global context. Te Rauparaha uses the analogies of Jonah and the whale – “The story I most like from your big black book, Hori” – and his own people’s legend of Maui fishing up the North Island, to illustrate his view of the relationship with King George III of England: “... we have a whale, and we live on it; while one of you fellas gets eaten by a whale My country eats you. Can’t go past that old symbolism now, can you, eh?”.⁷⁸⁹

In 1999 Hawes published *Inca Girls Aren’t Easy: Thirteen stories, twelve of which are true*, under the pseudonym W P Hearst. The title story draws on his experiences in the high Andes when he and the film crew were working on ‘The Neglected Miracle’: other stories also provide glimpses of his past (“... a black, pit-propped doorway that reminded Hearst of the entrance to the coalmine in which he had worked during university holidays”⁷⁹⁰) and clues to the origins of material worked into his plays and novels. ‘Certain Years Come Only Once a Century’⁷⁹¹ refers to his time at Canterbury University, and extensively backgrounds his 1986 play *Goldie, a Good Joke*, derived from an award-winning television documentary of the same name; ‘The Children’s Crusade’ describes his visit to a cathedral at Göreme, in Turkey, which inspired his story of the Bearded Lady in *Tasman’s Lay*⁷⁹². His description of a school reunion at ‘Ngakawau Tech’ in the Buller, however, reveals most about his literary inspirations and philosophies: “Life ... is a play whose author depends upon exigencies. It begins and ends with Beckett, spends most of its time chugging along under the unexceptional pens of the likes of Neil Simon and Alan Ayckbourne, rises now and then to Dario Fo, often entangles itself in the perplexities of Stoppard and usually descends, after marriage, to Pinter”.⁷⁹³

Continuing his prolific output from his Palmerston North base, Hawes also wrote and published his only adult non-fiction book, a 260-page history of New Zealand netball,⁷⁹⁴ in 1999, but he returns to the Buller region with his next novel, *The Dream of Nikau Jam*. Described by one academic as a “crude, relaxed version of his best form”

⁷⁸⁹ Hawes, *Waterloo* 140.

⁷⁹⁰ W P Hearst, ‘The Children’s Crusade,’ *Inca Girls Aren’t Easy*, Auckland: Random House, 1999, 45.

⁷⁹¹ Hearst 58-70. Hawes and director Greg Stitt jointly won a 1987 Gofta Award for their television documentary, *Goldie, a Good Joke*, which screened in December 1985.

⁷⁹² Hearst 46; Hawes, *Tasman’s* 185-187.

⁷⁹³ Hearst, ‘Madame Lepin of New Caledonia,’ 32.

⁷⁹⁴ Peter Hawes and Lizzy Barker, *Court in the Spotlight, 75 Years of New Zealand Netball*, Auckland, Netball NZ, 1999.

which makes fun of West Coast mores,⁷⁹⁵ the story also has much to say about Coast history, mythology and politics. When circuit judge Ralph ‘Radar’ Pyne arrives through the Buller Gorge from Christchurch, stopping to throw the obligatory stone into the river and argue with his talking Volvo car, he and Hawes’ readers consciously enter the different world of ‘the Wild West’; as in the fairytale worlds of Brigadoon or the Land of Oz, it is accepted that different rules apply. The principal characters make their entrances as on a stage set, with just as much attention to sound, lighting and first lines, but unlike Hawes’ previous novels there is no ‘outsider’ to compare, contrast and comment: this is an affectionate portrayal of ‘home’ and the opening descriptions of totara, tui and turgid water are real and familiar, as are the locals we meet down at the pub and in the underground coal mines where intellectually-challenged Simon ‘Feeffi’ Fyfe works alongside his friends. In fact, the satire is so gentle it takes a while to recognise the familiar myths and icons woven into the storyline: the men and women propping up the bar are the ‘Wild West’ characters of yarns told by Waratah, Lord, Hobbs and Anderson, the race day story about how the favourite was stopped in his tracks⁷⁹⁶ is a variation on ‘Bottle Queen’⁷⁹⁷, Sister Kingi weaves a vaguely recognisable Maori legend involving kumara, flying moa and the origins of the nikau in northern Buller, and the obligatory courtroom drama involves a drunken lawyer, a wise and humane judge, a complicit police officer and several powerful women. And, like all the best Coasters from King Dick Seddon onwards, Feeffi has a singing voice that stops people in their tracks and a favourite sentimental ballad⁷⁹⁸ that makes hardened men teary-eyed. The story has elements of Jonathan Swift’s satirical style: Feeffi Fyfe, the Gulliver-like giant at the centre of it, is not only accepted and cared for because he is ‘Special’ and valued for his size and immense strength, he also enjoys the privileges of being a public attraction and therefore an asset to the locals, who treat him with specially-crafted beer mugs and free tickets to the races. By making the enemy not only alternative lifestylers from up on Denniston but also astronomers who spy on Feeffi through their telescope, Hawes underlines both their alienness and their perceptions of superiority. The moral of his story is predictable and, like Swift’s, political: the Denniston four are educated

⁷⁹⁵ John Thomson, ‘New Zealand (with the South Pacific Islands),’ *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Sept 2001, 36:73:92.

⁷⁹⁶ Hawes, *Nikau Jam* 113-4.

⁷⁹⁷ Keenan 25.

⁷⁹⁸ I suspect ‘Loren Fell’, lines of which appear several times in the text, is composed by the author.

interlopers who take the moral high ground and look down on the locals but they get their comeuppance in court because they have neither practical skills (they do not know how to climb a nikau) nor local knowledge (they know there is no scientific reason for the differences between nikau trees, but Feefi knows there is a difference and his friends contrive to prove it). The story starts and ends with his death in March 1997; he literally lays ghosts to rest before his friends escort him on a surreal journey, rich with laughter and song, to heaven as he and the author perceive it – high in the nikau forest at the beginning of the Heaphy Track.

Hawes' most recent novel, *Royce, Royce, the People's Choice*, is subtitled 'The Story of a Young Man and the Sea', a reference he follows up through the narrative as 17-year-old troublemaker and social reprobate Royce Rowland discovers and is inspired by Hemingway. Hawes researched the book by going to sea as a deckhand on one of the Westport fishing boats⁷⁹⁹ and his descriptions of Royce's first day at sea with Bob Dodds and Sticky Moody⁸⁰⁰ are accurate and convincing, as are the later details of handling the tuna and the descriptions of Westport's commercial wharf, public bars and fish and chip shop, and the Japanese squid boats that light up the horizon at night. *Royce, Royce* is in one sense a sequel to *The Dream of Nikau Jam*, in that at least two of the characters from the former novel, Doddy Wold and Bev Ohern, make cameo appearances in the latter, but there are distinct elements of the American 'western' genre in *Royce, Royce*: the sea is the wild frontier, the fishermen are as tough as cowboys and living just as dangerously, taking their lives in their hands every time they cross the Westport bar. Like Vincent Pyke's *Wild Will Enderby*, Frank Bruno's *Fury at Finnegan's Folly* and Witi Ihimaera's *Bulibasha*, this very modern 'Wild West Coast' novel resonates with the preoccupations of the traditional western as outlined by Alex Calder.⁸⁰¹ Bob Dodds and his fellow skippers are masterful and taciturn, exuding presence rather than personality, and events such as Royce's out-of-control float down the Orowaiti River and the landing of the tuna are rolled out in tactile detail with the micro-sensations of the participants forming a key part of the narrative. Other elements of the classic western are also present: the men's fraternity is often

⁷⁹⁹ Hawes, *Royce* 8; Bob O'Hearn interview, Westport, 19 May, 2010.

⁸⁰⁰ Hawes, *Royce* 94-98.

⁸⁰¹ Alex Calder, 'Western Swing: John Mulgan's Man Alone,' keynote speech at Stout Research Centre Man Alone conference, Victoria University of Wellington, 2 September, 2011.

emphasised by their silence; violence is never far below the surface and the confrontation at sea between Bob, Sticky and Royce over the missing wrench reads as the ‘lead-up’ to a classic ‘shootout’; the town limits are a key boundary beyond which are danger or exile (the disgraced Penny Turton is literally run out of town); and while the good and faithful women wait at home, Betty the Sri Lankan prostitute earns the respect of the men because she can ‘rope a steer’, or in this case wrangle a 700lb tuna, better than they can.

Royce Rowland is an outrageously larger-than-life character and the novel is outrageously comic: one critic said, “Hawes has written a book that breaks with New Zealand’s tradition of introspective and slightly melancholy literature,”⁸⁰² but in fact none of his five New Zealand-based novels fit that tradition, which may in some part account for the neglect of his work by the literary media and the reading public. Four of them cross national boundaries (part of *Royce* is set in Japan), they are all rich with literary allusions (*Royce* invokes Samuel Wordsworth, H G Wells and Herman Melville as well as Hemingway), they all involve “Rabelasian romping”⁸⁰³ of a more or less graphic nature and the dialogue is full of kiwi vernacular reminiscent of the best of Barry Crump, the only other writer of Coast-based comic novels.

Hawes’ most recent Coast work is *The Gods of Warm Beer*, a play which he began as a biography of his father before realising the greater potential for a work of fiction. He moved the timing of Bob Hawes’ professional rugby league contract forward a year so it would coincide with the 1951 waterfront strike, for greater dramatic effect, and he titled it in tribute to his father’s own version of Murphy’s Law, also used in *The Dream of Nikau Jam*,⁸⁰⁴; sometimes you go to the races and the beer is cold and the pies are warm, but sometimes the pies are cold and the beer is warm. The ‘Gods of Warm Beer’, then, are the forces of entropy and ill-fortune.⁸⁰⁵ Hawes’ father plays himself in ‘The Pianola’, one of the W P Hearst stories in *Inca Girls Aren’t Easy*⁸⁰⁶ where the roots of *Gods of Warm Beer* can be discerned as two Westport men escort their former British teammate from the Halifax Rugby League Football Club on a sightseeing tour of the Coast. They stop at

⁸⁰² Quoted by Hawes but unattributed, in an article in *Massey Magazine* in which he reviews his own reviews (www.massey.ac.nz/~wwpupafs/magazine/2002_Nov/stories/Royce_royce.html).

⁸⁰³ Hawes, *Massey Magazine*.

⁸⁰⁴ Hawes, *Nikau Jam* 108.

⁸⁰⁵ Director Ross Gumbley, quoted in www.theatreview.org.nz/reviews/production.php?ld=1061 THE GODS OF WARM BEER.

⁸⁰⁶ Hearst 90-105.

Jackson's Hotel on the way down from West Coast side of Arthur's Pass where, in company with the author, they join the revelry of the publican's last shout. This is Hawes at his best: outsider, son, sober driver and fly-on-the-wall commentator who, on another level, is deeply engaged with the scene and the people in it, men whose facial wrinkles "went downwards, like drainage troughs" and women with faces "surgered by determination and milking".⁸⁰⁷ When his father 'Ben' quotes Shakespeare, the hilarity skids to a halt, "from knee-slap to head-scratch in half a second," not because of the words but because he admits to having voluntarily read and enjoyed them: Shakespeare, like the Bible, is "Venerable" and Ben is subject for some time to sidelong glances of puzzlement, suspicion – and slight veneration. Just as quickly, Hawes turns the tables on the concept: when he admits to the "spry crone" belting out honky tonk on the piano that he is a writer working on a play about Samuel Butler, he discovers she knows more about his subject than he does. "This *is* the West Coast ... Erewhon is only a few dozen miles across those mountains out there," she explains, but Butler had described the Coast as colourless and could therefore be dismissed as a "Jumped up little pommie git."⁸⁰⁸ 'The Pianola' is as personal as Hawes gets, and the pub at Jackson's becomes a place of pilgrimage filled with memories of the three old rugby players. The punch line is that the piano was actually a pianola and the woman whose playing he had admired so much was merely peddling, tongue in cheek: like so much of what happens on the Coast it was a myth and an illusion.

⁸⁰⁷ Hearst 91.

⁸⁰⁸ Hearst 100.

CONCLUSION

That this thesis has been concerned only with imaginative writing is to some extent a matter of scale and space; the non-fiction work of Philip Ross May, A Maude Moreland and Gerhard Mueller,⁸⁰⁹ for example, is acknowledged as fine literature and there are other such writers who have documented aspects of West Coast history and whose books have been valuable resources for the novelists and playwrights. The greater reason for their exclusion from the annotated bibliography, however, is the same reason that all imaginative writing pertaining to the Coast has, as far as possible, been included regardless of its popularity, worth or literary merit (among the more significant novelists and poets are many unknown writers whose work, frequently self-published and often with small print runs, has made little or no impact on the reading public). By focusing on imaginative writing I have demonstrated not only how Coast writing has developed alongside the rest of New Zealand writing but also how the settlement history of the West Coast has been exploited and mythologized in the literature and how it has come to represent to the wider community particular aspects of 'New Zealandness', not least to those who have chosen in more recent times to settle there.

The West Coast was neither the first nor the only goldfields district in New Zealand, although it was the major one, yet there have been more historical goldfields novels set there than in Otago, Thames or Aorere, for example⁸¹⁰; I can only echo Charlotte Randall's rationale that the physical environment of the West Coast goldfields, including their weather patterns, provides the heightened drama and challenge for the main protagonists which is necessary to a good story. The Coast's physical isolation has served a similar purpose for writers wanting to remove the action of their stories from the distractions of modern life; even in the last decade, contemporary fiction writers have emphasised the lack

⁸⁰⁹ Gerhard Mueller and M V Mueller, *My Dear Bannie : Gerhard Mueller's Letters from the West Coast, 1865-6*, Christchurch: Pegasus Press, 1958.

⁸¹⁰ Expatriate New Zealander Ruth Park's bestselling 1957 novel *One-a-pecker, Two-a-pecker* (republished as *The Frost and The Fire*, Sydney: Michael Joseph, 1958), although set in Otago, also underlines the movement of goldminers from Australia to New Zealand and the independence of women forced to make their own way.

of social interchange, cellphone coverage and urban facilities because it serves their plots. The fact that early transport systems were based on shipping rather than road or rail has facilitated the literary device of 'new beginnings'; I have already commented on the drama of the land-based 'gateways' to the Coast, and arrival by sea offers the same transitional opportunity for characters to move from the observer role to that of participant. Historically, people did not 'pass through' the Coast but came deliberately for a purpose, arriving in a tightly-clustered community of interest such as Denniston or Charleston and interacting with whoever or whatever they found there; the nature of such definitive arrivals, whether by boat, stagecoach or coal truck, allows imaginative writers to invent both past and future for their main protagonists, incorporating iconic signposts of landscape and social history while at the same time dehistoricising their stories.

Geographical clustering in the literature mirrors the pattern of historical settlement and modern commerce; Hokitika and Greymouth, undoubtedly the two main population centres, represent goldmining and coalmining respectively, with Denniston (in Buller district) and Blackball the main focus of coalmining literature, while South Westland represents wilderness and, more recently, tourism. Until recently (when it has become a focus of environmental activism) little has been written about the rest of the Buller district, although it is rich in Maori history, was integral to the timber industry and its quartz-mining settlements have been the subject of a number of non-fiction accounts; similarly the once-thriving goldfield town of Okarito is known only because Keri Hulme lives and works there. Other notable omissions from the Coast's fiction are: the use of aeroplanes, in spite of the fact that the West Coast was a district of pioneering aviation and there is a large resource of non-fiction material and memoir on the subject; the Westland-based cattle industry, which has been the subject of memoir and occasionally poetry but is mentioned in only three books of prose fiction; and the track, road and rail network which was established with considerable expense and difficulty and is well-documented in non-fiction and memoir but only incidental to the imaginative literature. Again the physical isolation of the Coast is the key; the emphasis is on 'differentness' rather than universality, and the colonial pioneer settler/farmer story belongs elsewhere in New Zealand. Butler's *Erewhon* and Palmer's *Too Many Zeroes*, the first and last novels in the chronological bibliography, are remarkably similar in many respects, not least in that they underline the status of the

Coast as ‘other-worldly’; the devices of hot air balloon (which occurs several times in the literature) and spaceship are part of the larger intent of both authors, which is to present other viewpoints to the narrative. Although the former is adult satire and the latter children’s adventure fiction, both authors, along with Hawes, Hulme and Hooper in particular, utilise shifts of time, place and cultural perspective to create universal stories that nonetheless contain recognisable Coast themes.

In imaginative fiction, as in reality, the Coast is often a place of origin and return rather than long-term habitat; there is comparatively little modification to the landscape, there are few pastoral scenes and fewer dynasties; perhaps because of this there is an element of cultural longing in much of the work but, apart from a few of Hugh Smith’s poems, the nostalgia is localised. This is reinforced by praise of poet Cornelius O’Regan, in 1896, as a “native-born New Zealander”; bolstered by Peter Hooper’s plan, in the 1960s, to publish the work of New Zealanders who no longer identify with England, emphasised by the twenty historical novels published in the last two decades with the West Coast of the 19th century as their setting. It is also significant that poetry, whether for performance or personal pleasure, is alive and well on the Coast as an art form, accounting for over a third of its publications; although there has been a recent resurgence of ‘live poets’ societies and events in other parts of New Zealand, too, the genre has never been in decline in the region where much of the poetry reflects personal enjoyment of the physical environment.

Not surprisingly, a number of Coast writers of both fiction and non-fiction have been on the teaching staff at Greymouth High School, the largest educational institution on the Coast (in 1979 schoolteachers Paul Caffyn, Susan Battye, Thelma Eakin and Peter Hooper all published work in the same year), but it was Hooper’s passion for literature that inspired others on the Coast. Particularly after he retired from teaching he organised writers’ groups and poetry readings, encouraging writers such as Marlene Bennetts and Anne Donovan into print and forming, however loosely, what can be described as the West Coast school of writing, a creative literary movement through the 1970s and 1980s that saw writers discussing and developing their work together. In 2009, Holman wrote that “In supporting my work, he supported West Coast writing – and part of me has never left the place. I no longer live there and Peter is long dead, but for me, and too many others to mention, Peter Hooper did what was needed to plant and nourish a literary culture on that

coastline. It is this work, along with his own poetry, fiction, memoirs, and writings on conservation, that allows him to stand as a founding father to many – and a lasting reason as to why West Coast writing will always matter to me.⁸¹¹

Notwithstanding Hooper's presence and influence as a facilitator, however, it cannot be argued that he or any other single person has shaped the way the Coast is portrayed in literature. In the two decades since his death in 1991, writers such as Keri Hulme, Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, Pat White and Penelope Todd, along with cinematographers such as Alun Bollinger, have produced creative work clearly influenced by the nature of the physical environment. Other writing has been influenced by the non-fiction work of earlier generations, from Brunner to Tracy, which, as I have demonstrated, has been a rich resource made more accessible in recent years by facsimile and electronic publishing; by the personal stories and memories of retired coalminers and their families who lived through the era of strong unionism; and by the exploits of a number of strong-minded and independent men and women who have chosen to live and work in the district and often, in doing so, made a deliberate choice against urban and suburban lifestyles. Leicester Kyle speaks for many such 'incomers':

Sometimes
we wonder
why we're here —

a question they don't ask
over the hill
where they had a planned coming

We came in a rush
out of coal gold and timber

we're of the earth
at no particular place
and aren't on the way
to anywhere⁸¹²

The last two decades have seen fresh examinations of the particular characteristics of South Island literature, commentaries largely concerned with its physical, social and

⁸¹¹ Holman, 'Peter Hooper.'

⁸¹² Kyle, 'The People,' *Breaker* 9.

emotional spaces and its perceived differences which are expressed succinctly, if sardonically, in a ‘short short story’⁸¹³ by Sarah Quigley; she is “fishing for words” in company with Keri Hulme, Owen Marshall, Brian Turner, “Stevan double-barrelled Grigg” and Janet Frame, all gathered happily at Hulme’s bach for “a cuppa” and a barbecue, “all mainlanders ya see says keri cos we hafta stick together”; the outsider is Katherine Mansfield whose Wellington accent, London clothes and disdainful remarks ruin the ambience and reduce the writer to black rage. Classifications of North or South, urban or rural, high country or lowland have, however, as little relevance to the position of West Coast literature with the larger national corpus as the concept of nationhood had to the goldminers of the 1860s.

Rather, Alex Calder’s recent interpretation of the concept of *terroir*, a term more familiar in the promotional literature of the winegrowing industry, does have particular application to the West Coast. “What the French call *terroir* is actual space – a sub-national region defined by soil, microclimate and produce; and also something more than actual space – a complex geo-cultural entity whose modes of existence are legal, commercial and ideological, and give rise to the imagined community of those who believe in them”.⁸¹⁴ The literature of the Coast is certainly defined by physical geography, climate and ‘produce’, its modes of existence are ideological and its imagined inhabitants have a littoral rather than a national identity; that is to say they are, in Keri Hulme’s words, coastal “fringe-dwellers” who occupy a particular zone on the edge of the country and have a particular relationship to its heart.

⁸¹³ Sara Quigley, ‘Just another Wednesday night on the west coast waiting for the muse to strike,’ Lay, Graeme (ed) *100 NZ Short Short Stories*, North Shore:Tandem, 1997, 55-6.

⁸¹⁴ Alex Calder, *The Settler's Plot : How Stories Take Place in New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2011, 111.

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